Viewpoint: A new meaning of meaning

instruct us that "nothing shall come of nothing".

Personally, I do not see how a secular, statistically based theory of meaning and of value can, over time, withstand either the deconstructionist challenge or its own fragmentation into liberal eclecticism. I cannot arrive at any rigorous conception of a possible determination of either sense or stature which does not wager on a transcendence, on a real presence, in the act and product of serious art, be it verbal, musical, or that of material forms.

Such a conviction leads to logical suppositions which are exceedingly difficult to express clearly, let alone to demonstrate. But the possible confusion and, in our present climate of approved sentiment, the inevitable embarrassment which must accompany any public avowal of mystery, seem to me preferable to the slippery evasions and conceptual deficits in contemporary hermeneutics and criticism. It is these which strike me as false to common experience, as incapable of bearing witness to such manifest phenomena as the creation of a literary persona who will endure far beyond the life of the creator (Flaubert's dying cry against "that whore Emma Bovary"), as incapable of insight into the invention of melody or the evident transmutations of our experiences of space, of light, of the planes and volumes of our own being, brought about by a Mantegna, a Turner or a Cézanne.

It may be the case that nothing more is available to us than the absence of God. Wholly felt and lived, that absence is an agency and *mysterium tremendum* (without which a Racine, a Dostoevsky, a Kafka are, indeed, nonsense or food for deconstruction). To infer such terms of reference, to apprehend something of the cost one must be prepared to pay in declaring them, is to be left naked to unknowing. I believe that one must take the risk if one is to have the right to strive towards the perennial, never-fully-to-be-realized ideal of all interpretation and valuation: which is that, one day, Orpheus will not turn around, and that the truth of the poem will return to the light of understanding, whole, inviolate, life-giving, even out of the dark of omission and of death.

This is a partial text of the Leslie Stephen Memorial Lecture delivered at Cambridge University on November 1. The complete version is to be published by Cambridge University Press.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Julian Budden is working on a study of Puccini.
David Carlton is the author of *Anthony Eden: A biography*, 1981.
Henry Chadwick is Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity at the University of Cambridge.
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Stefan Collini's books include *The Noble Science of Politics: A study in nineteenth-century intellectual history*, written with Donald Winch and John Burrow, and published in 1983.
Thomas M. Disch's most recent novel, *The Businessman: A tale of terror*, was published last year.
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H. S. Ferns's most recent book, *What Politics is About*, was published earlier this year.
Margaret FitzHerbert is the author of *The Man who was Greenmantle: A biography of Aubrey Herbert*, 1983.
Alastair Fowler's most recent book is *An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, 1982.
Alastair Hamilton's *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563–1632* was published earlier this year.
Michael Hofmann's collection of poems, *Nights in the Iron Hotel*, appeared last year.
Marianne Korn is the editor of *Ezra Pound and History*, which was published earlier this year.
Richard Langham-Smith is a lecturer in Music at the City University.
Peter Porter's most recent collection of poems, *Fast Forward*, was published earlier this year.
David Profumo is co-editor, with Graham Swift, of *The Magic Wheel: An anthology of fishing in literature*, to be published later this year.
David Pryce-Jones is the author of *Cyril Connolly: Journal and memoir*, 1983.
Bryan Ranft's books include *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, 1983.
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Contents

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PAT ROGERS Peter Conrad: *The Everyman History of English Literature* 1279–80
EUGEN WEBER Philippe Boutry and Jacques Nassif: *Martin L'Archange* 1281
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H. R. KEDWARD Magnus Linklater, Isabel Hilton and Neal Ascherson: *The Fourth Reich – Klaus Barbie and the neo-fascist connection*
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Tom Bower: *Klaus Barbie – Butcher of Lyons*
John Beattie: *The Life and Career of Klaus Barbie – An eyewitness record* 1282
CONNIE BENSLEY The Winner (Poem) 1282
PAUL THOMPSON Alan Crawford: *C. R. Ashbee – Architect, designer and romantic socialist* 1283–4
JOSEPH DARRACOTT Keith Clements: *Henry Lamb – The artist and his friends* 1284
CHRISTOPHER REID William Packer: *Henry Moore – An illustrated biography* 1284
JOHN CAMPBELL Michael Rustin: *For a Pluralist Socialism* 1285
BEN PIMLOTT Martin Holmes: *The Labour Government, 1974–79 – Political aims and economic reality* 1285
JOHN KEEGAN Anthony Kenny: *The Logic of Deterrence* 1286
PETER READING Crop Inspecting (poem) 1286
PAUL SMITH Gerald Kaufman: *My Life in the Silver Screen* 1287
MARK LE FANU John Boorman: *Money into Light – "The Emerald Forest": A diary* 1287
BRIAN CASE Red Callender and Elaine Cohen: *Unfinished Dream – The musical world of Red Callender* 1288
CHARLES FOX Gary Giddins: *Rhythm-a-ning – Jazz tradition and innovation in the 80s* 1288
ERIC KORN Remainders 1290
Fifty years on 1290
Letters on 'Tito's Flawed Legacy', Capital Sins, 'Bonington, Francis and Wyld' etc 1291

Commentary
PETER KEMP *The Other Side of Paradise. Tender is the Night* (BBC2) 1292
H. R. WOUDHUYSEN Sales of books and MSS 1292
LINDA COLLEY *The Treasure Houses of Britain* (National Gallery of Art, Washington)
Gervase Jackson-Stops (Editor): *The Treasure Houses of Britain* 1293

ANDREW HISLOP John Mortimer: *Paradise Postponed* 1294
LINDA TAYLOR Maggie Brooks: *Heavenly Deception* 1294
SALLY DAWSON Thea Astley: *An Item from the Late News. Beachmasters* 1295
KEVIN BROWN Janet Frame: *Owls Do Cry* 1295
TIM DOOLEY Ted Walker: *You've Never Heard Me Sing – Short stories* 1296
CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE John Braine: *These Golden Days* 1296
TONY SATTIN Stephen Benatar: *Such Men are Dangerous* 1296
ANTHONY FOTHERGILL Peter Handke: *The Weight of the World. Slow Homecoming* 1297–8
JOYCE CRICK Christa Wolf: *Cassandra – A novel and four essays* 1298
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HIDÉ ISHIGURO Stuart Brown: *Leibniz*
Nicholas Jolley: *Leibniz and Locke – A study of the "New Essays on Human Understanding"* 1300
Author, Author 1300
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Don Mosey: *Boycott*
Gerald Brodribb: *Next Man In – A survey of cricket laws and customs* 1303
IAN THOMSON Daniel Topolski: *Boat Race – The Oxford revival* 1303
Among this week's contributors 1303
Index of books reviewed 1303

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Shooting the literary rapids

Pat Rogers

PETER CONRAD
The Everyman History of English Literature
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Old Everyman had no call for a route-map on his long march through literature. After all, Knowledge had promised on the flyleaf to go with him and be his guide: so he (masculinity was part of the full burden of adulthood, as with Christian) could make for the open text as soon as he had negotiated the title-page, art nouveau thickets enclosing instructive maxims, and brushed past a scrubby introduction. There were Everyman dictionaries of mythology and encyclopædias of gardening; plus a series of "literary and historical" atlases, where you could look up the frontiers of Austria-Hungary, the battle-plan of Saratoga, or places mentioned in *The Cloister and the Hearth*. But you weren't expected to want a history of literature. Even the introductions were confident and untechnical: Chesterton on Dickens, Professor Saintsbury on Balzac, making the classics appear accessibly classical. Hadn't Saintsbury read a French novel every day for donkey's years, and before breakfast at that? Now, in our more anxious age of solemn exegesis, comes Peter Conrad. Where old Everyman would have found a motto from Emerson, there are the cruelly precise cataloguing data. "Conrad, Peter, 1948 – ", it says, as though to get the chronicle under way. The man must have started reading in the womb, and carried on from breakfast to midnight.

When Janáček wrote his *Glagolitic Mass*, he said that it would be different from other like compositions: cheerful. Conrad's book is, well, different; and pretty cheerful too, in that the consolations of art are sufficient to atone for the worst that life can throw in its path. There is a joyous acceptance of contingency, which comes from the lack of any overmastering system in Conrad's narrative. Primarily, he loves words, and describes evolution and change in terms of the seismic shifts of language: "Above all, the revolution is a liberation of language. *The French Revolution* is a Niagara of words, so torrentially inexhaustible and so unconstrained by its committal to paper and its damming-up as literature that Carlyle was able to rewrite it – or re-activate the geyser – when Mill's parlour-maid lit the fire with his original manuscript." Conrad is happy to live under Niagara, shooting the lexical rapids with intrepid bravado. "Literature is a love-affair with language", he observes late on. Much earlier, he enquires of some lines in *The Dunciad*: "Is there anything more bizarrely beautiful and more luxuriantly euphonic in English poetry: anything more aware of what poetry is – a love affair with language and the sensual pleasure of its pronunciation?" *Prima la musica e poi le parole*: a view so deliberately outmoded as exactly to fit A. C. Benson's requirements for a don's tailoring, the fashion before last.

More widely, the book's stance could be seen as one of a radical Toryism. If not a system, there is a theme or dialectic, stated in this way: "The formal originality of English literature declares itself in the reordering of relations between the classical genres: epic's demotion, or its merger with romance and pastoral." So the early chapters replay W. P. Ker, with *Beowulf*, *Gawain* and *Troilus and Criseyde* jockeying one another for imaginative space. The passage on Carlyle quoted just now continues, "It completes a romantic revolution in the overturning of ancestral and inherited genre – a process which in English literature does not wait for 1789 but has been inexorably happening since Chaucer, Langland and Spenser." All Eng Lit can be read as contributing to, or delaying, this long revolution: not to be romantic is a sort of failure, in so far as the crucial declension is that from epic to romance. The novel is essentially "pastoral", that is domestic, unheroic, quietist and (more controversially) the domain of contemplative as against active narrative.

Set out in these terms, it might appear as if Conrad's argument is merely providing the screenplay from a scenario by Northrop Frye or Alastair Fowler. There must be some influence at a deep level, but in fact Conrad is much more thoroughgoing. To Frye, the kinds are ghostly Platonic forms, abstract possibilities to which real works of art are not required to conform with any plausible fidelity. Fowler uses them as heuristic tools in a quest for theoretical clarity. But for Conrad it is a matter not so much of bare typologies as living principles, instinct within the texts themselves: genre has become the basic protoplasm of writing. So he reifies the historic kinds with an almost positivist relish: "Epic strays into romance or relaxes into pastoral: it is seen through by allegory" (on Spenser). "Tragedy resumes as comedy in *Richard III* when – with that seasonal rhythm which is the beatitude of pastoral – the winter of discontent turns to glorious summer." Less facile: "Because *As You Like It* is a pastoral, it contemplatively arrests drama." Still more directly: "The plays designated as problems are so for the same reason that every Shakespearean play is one: the problem is the inseparability in them of tragedy and comedy." So tragicomedy is a key issue, to be worried through with the help of Johnson and others.

Berowne "ingeniously resists his miscasting in a tragedy of revenge"; Jaques's speech on the ages of man is tragic in implication, "for though it adopts the comic form of the cycle, returning the old man to his original childishness, it omits the regeneration which is comedy's assurance." Of *Sejanus*: "Tragedy demands the body's carving-up; comedy still hopes for its cure." So the battle of the genres extends down through history: "After *Paradise Lost* there can only be parodies of what is, in the classical hierarchy of genres, the highest of forms, because Milton has demonstrated epic's perfidy and obsolescence. Epic for Milton proves incompatible with Christianity." Not a new idea, but one that here meshes in with a huge array of similar perceptions. Sometimes the insight is more piercing, as on *Lyrical Ballads*: "The very title of the collection hints oxymoronically at the contrary aims which are involved. The ballad is innocently and happily extrovert, the body's narrative jog-trot through the world . . . : the lyric meanwhile remains inconsolably introverted, brooding on the body's apparent automatism and angrily questioning the motives for its motion" (the matter of word-play I shall be coming to presently). A little further on in the book: "At the end of . . . *Sohrab and Rustum*, the epic conflict dies into pastoral." Here the preposition *into* supplies a sense of ineluctable mutation, which Conrad discerns throughout. Speaking of the pyre of adventures stories made by the heroine of Kipling's story "Mary Postgate", he says, "the fire is fuelled by 'Hentys, Marryats, Levers, Stevensons, Baroness Orczys': from the incineration of romance, epic is made". A chapter links decadence and nonsense as *fin-de-siècle* bedfellows; "Nonsense is decadence under the frivolous sign of comedy. It is also an English version of symbolism."

The key to this mythos of generic shift is provided near the start: "Generically, literary history works as a progressive decline. Each new form, slipping down the hierarchy of esteem, parodies its forebear higher up." Romance demotes epic; the novel demotes romance. *Ulysses*, as residuary legatee, demotes the novel and everything else. (Satire, by the way, is not technically a kind here: Homer and Virgil are everywhere, but Horace does not put in a single appearance.) Conrad, it will be seen, goes some way beyond the mere Eliotic rearrangement of the past. For him "literature's natural tense is the grieving past historic, for it exists precisely to delay the haste of present time". Works of literature seek to arrest the flow of events, for only the static can offer the writer a full purchase: "literature is language at play, or on show." For "art is necessary to us as it is useless. We retrieve riches from the ground and must at last surrender them to the ground again." This is said of *Beowulf*, but it fits the general plan. There are minute revisions all the time: "Each generation of novelists inherits a realism which it discovers to be conventionalised and untrue." So the lineage is one of adjustment and correction: Eliot has to "correct" Dante in *East Coker*. The verb is friendly and quasi-technical: the old works are not supplanted, and remain within sight, bloody but unbowed. Conrad does not adopt the Freudian family-history of Harold Bloom: his generation gaps are peaceably bridged by the attraction of novelty and the irrevocability of time. He sees literature as "the heirloom of an extended family", and Leopold Bloom is able happily to socialize "within the gregarious plenum of language".

Such a method gives the author abundant opportunity for intertextual slides, and this he grasps to remarkable effect. He illuminates Webster by Oscar Wilde; he explores *Biographia Literaria* as a stepchild of *Tristram Shandy*. He is a master of the unexpected collocation: none of his chapters sticks rigidly to the authors nominally under discussion, but rather each leaps out towards parallels from elsewhere. He likes pairing authors: often to superb effect, as in the section on Auden and Isherwood, which elevates the latter by making him respond (as he does, in this account) to the challenge of the former. Some couplings are routine, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge; some more surprising, as with Joseph Conrad and Kipling. The antitheses often cast a sharp and immediate light, as witness the difference between *Sketches* (Boz) and *Scenes* (clerical life). There is a constant surge of life passing from one book to another, as Conrad exposes to view the unregarded consanguinity of creative minds.

One of his outstanding talents lies in the uncovering of afterlives. He has a splendid chapter on Shakespeare in the mirror of later

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writing; he traces "*Paradise Lost* and its Predestining" down the ages; he follows *Wuthering Heights* into Buñuel's surrealist recension and emerges with a fuller light on the text. As one would expect, his antennae are acute for operatic vibrations. Scott, otherwise disappointingly thin in coverage, perks up briefly when *Lucia di Lammermoor* can be deployed. *Man and Superman* is discussed as a systematic defilement of *Don Giovanni*. This characteristic method is seen to its greatest effect in the section on Auden, where Conrad perceives the utility to the "elderly, matriarchal Auden" of the Falstaff figure:

> Auden's own "Aquarian belly" . . . is the badge of his citizenship in Arcadia; and Falstaff in turn is repatriated to Eden in Windsor Forest by opera, the form which overhears the vocal plangency of souls and ignores the unwieldiness of corseted, perspiring bodies . . . . Falstaff's salvation by opera confirms what Auden believed to be the blessedness of music, not translating, like literature, across the sad gap between experience and image. Song is impartially generous . . . .

This is *almost* what Auden says at the beginning of his essay "The Prince's Dog". But Conrad, vainly, imperiously and triumphantly, has said it a little better: his terms are sharper, his phrasing neater, his case more clear-cut. Even when Conrad appears, apropos of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, to be seeking to outdo Shakespeare in cleverness, one forgives him. His way of reading is to co-opt the energy and sparkle of the author under review, and the reckless ambition to match them in his own medium brings with it an extraordinary verve.

Of course it is an effortful style, but so are the heavy engineering jobs of every Dick Minim with a PhD who sets out to impose a methodological straitjacket on some hapless text. Conrad at least is up to his task (he rises to the major works, with outstanding chapters on Milton, Dickens and Joyce); he is often funny, as on the stammerings and splutterings in Browning; he runs Wilde to a short head in paradox, and manages close Shavian encounters with Wagnerism. If, as Barbara Everett has recently claimed, style is a sort of historical understanding, then Conrad's use of words enacts a doctrine of scattered particulars. Events and ideas chime across the ages, much as with the illogical unifier which is rhyme in verse. Conrad cites a Howard Brenton character to the effect that, in dismissing the past, he "confirms his affinity with it": so Conrad's own leaps and bounds assert not formal but inward affinities, fleeting links between the apparently disparate. He has wonderful semi-digressive passages on the cathedral in the nineteenth-century imagination, and then on the camera in that of the twentieth century. Behind the relentless word-play, at such moments, there shows through a truly receptive sensibility: you can only see that "impressionism inundated the cathedral and its moral remonstrances: Monet's Rouen is liquefied by light, Debussy's *cathédrale engloutie* has been submerged" if you can think of the way to say it.

People who dislike Conrad's manner, and there are plenty of them, are apt to call it phrase-making. The first answer is that one makes a critical argument with phrases, not with ideological verities. But the second and better answer is to observe simply what phrases they are. Conrad's narrative is different, as I noted at the start, and it is the wit which makes the difference. Even his more commonplace views are redeemed from the stale and orthodox by their vivacity of utterance. It would take a special supplement to the *Oxford Book of Aphorisms* to illustrate this adequately: but consider a brief sampling. In order of appearance, then: "The hero of an epic is less an individual – which is the solitary mission of the errant romance hero – than a divine average." Formidably neat: but perfectly true also. On *amour courtois*: "The code enjoins a ritualised delaying of gratification. Courtly love is the protraction of foreplay." Here the tiny vulgarities are themselves lingered on; and seemingly relished: the point comes over all the more clearly. "The secret duty of the . . . Spenserian stanza is to impede narrative and to dissipate . . . the energies of epic." This must often have been thought, but has it ever been more accurately expressed? In contrast to Milton, "the thronging liveliness of Spenser . . . engenders a glad democracy of narrative". The allusiveness is perhaps overdone at times, and it is not absolutely clear whether Conrad means us to pick up an allusion when he writes that the Archbishop of York in *Henry IV* "sees forgetfulness of time as the primal error, condemning those who have not learnt the lesson of history to suffer the purgatory of repeating it". Here Conrad's virtuosity is maybe a drawback, in that his voice can genuinely be confused with that of the texts among which he sports. But his sweeping statements are more often helpful than simply epideictic, as in reference to the rise of the novel: "Modern man understands liberty not as the chance to distinguish himself in the public space but as a guarantee of his privacy" (this improves on Madame de Staël without dislodging her in the argument). In Defoe, says Conrad, "discourse is itself a vent – a leakage which ought to be stopped up, the place of entry for a thief, the lesion through which disease insinuates itself". One could not get closer to Defoe's strange inner workings than that.

And so we pass on towards later periods. "The orientalism of Collins's eclogues . . . is a style aware of its own imposture." Exactly so; and even an apparently flippant aside bears its little kernel of truth: "Beckford appraises Portugal as a garden of temptations, to each of which he is careful to succumb." Then on Dickens: "Gothically, Dickens sees characters as made not grown, carved and whittled into shapes by the rude inventiveness of nature." Conrad's discussion here is in the tradition of Hillis Miller and John Carey, but its own unfailing eloquence enables the account to come over with an air of complete freshness. Later on: "Eliot's literary history is tragically dissociated, Joyce's comically continuous." If one thinks on first reading that this is not as surprising as its natty articulation might suggest, then on a second look one sees that this is the point. As with Hazlitt, whose *Lectures on the English Poets* (especially the first) lie behind much of the book, the effervescence serves to make the reader accept a truth staled by customary assent.

Nor is the volume especially radical in terms of coverage. It is of course distinctly selective: thin, as I have remarked, on Scott, and silent on Burns, perhaps as an alien voice. Browne and Burton get very summary treatment, Traherne is there but not Vaughan, Huxley is in but Waugh is out. Iris Murdoch one, Muriel Spark nought. Hopkins is dispatched quickly, but I can live with that. Of those who are included, very few writers emerge without some illumination. Neither Conrad (Joseph) nor Virginia Woolf comes out very strongly; the post-war scene is predictably a bit arbitrary in its perspective; but it is Jane Austen under whom Peter Conrad's genius is rebuked. She puts in the merest *acte de présence*, and it is only the parodic, self-exploding text of *Northanger Abbey* which retains any life. But against this, the book is immensely superior to most such manuals in its coverage of drama, right up to the present. Conrad, for one thing, can see why it is that Wilde and Shaw matter. One might think that the moderns would give Conrad some difficulty, in that they have already conducted the kind of reflexive interpretation on themselves which he delights to perform: but in the event there is no sag at all as we move on from Yeats and Lawrence to Larkin, Pinter and beyond.

If the authors themselves are canonical, that does not always apply to the books discussed. As will have appeared earlier on, there is a distinct effort to regain for Carlyle's *French Revolution* the centrality it once enjoyed; and *Modern Painters* takes a similar place in the design. *Enoch Arden* contributes a good deal to the reading of Tennyson; some of Shelley's forgotten lyrics, as well as *The Cenci*, illuminate his entries into the text; James is approached through *The Awkward Age* and *What Maisie Knew*, rather than the blockbusters. Conrad devotes considerable space to *The Dynasts*, and characteristically makes one feel it is a better work than one had realized. For that matter, few recent critics have got as much out of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. There are occasional minor writers among the great voices, and Conrad allows their accents to sound forth: he has a perceptive little section on the "watery weddings" in *Poly-Olbion*, and he gives one a guilty sense that not to have read Len Deighton's *Bomber* is one's own loss.

Random disagreements there are bound to be, in the nature of the case. If one looks for a wider defect of the method, to go with its signal virtues, then this must be the danger which attaches to Conrad's habit of slicing straight into a book for a telling quotation. He is brilliantly successful in most of these dawn raids upon a text, and regularly brings back with him a single sentence or two which will focus a central concern – to take one example among many, Mr Thornton's comment about his "Teutonic" blood in *North and South*. But just occasionally the extracts are plucked too easily from their context; and this applies especially to novels. Conrad sees the post-classical, non-epic career as an "ingressive" one, that is a life which avoids activity in favour of self-examination. This argument requires that later works, especially fiction, should betray a longing for stasis and passivity; a "cancellation of drama" by the novel, for instance in James. The ideal text, for Conrad's purposes, would be the version of *A Rebours*, promulgated by Dorian Gray, "a novel without a plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realise in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own". But such books are few on the ground; therefore Conrad has to invent them. He claims that "novels characteristically begin with the resignation of characters from action" (the word-play here may be a symptom of uneasiness). All he can find to back this are *Dodsworth* and *The Razor's Edge* – but think instead of *Babbit* or *The Painted Veil*, and the point loses conviction.

More seriously, he imputes to Hardy a "fascination [with] motionlessness", and a realization that "characters in novels are placed . . . beyond the pale of activity". So he cites Little Hintock in *The Woodlanders* as a ruminative Arcadia, and instances Fitzpiers's attempts to live in quiet narrowness. But Fitzpiers is not the central consciousness, is driven to action and even melodramatic gesture, and serves only to disturb any such wise passiveness there might have been in the village. To use one of his own words, Conrad is unwriting *The Woodlanders* – ignoring its strong and simple art, which is that of its plot, and which defies lightning incursions for a ready quotation. Similarly Conrad makes a curious sense out of Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" by allocating it to a pastoral region where nothing can happen – "a contented, indifferent rural otium like the Brueghel landscape". But something vitally does happen in the painting and in the poem, and Conrad has his way only by suppressing "something amazing" that occurs and by privileging the ploughman's self-preoccupation. "For him it was not an important failure", but the poem speaks too of the "disaster", for it concerns the débâcle of Icarus as well as the indifferent onlookers.

This is not a volume intended in the usual sense as a work of reference: books to refer to should have neatly self-enclosed entries, once-for-all coverage, unswerving chronologies. All these Conrad commendably abjures. But it will probably be used in this capacity, as Everyman (even modern sophisticated Every-man-and-woman, who can cope with the author's dazzlingly agile prose) needs a date of publication more often than a smart one-liner, however pointed. It is a good thing then that titles and dates are consistently accurate, with just an odd transposition of figures. On the occasion of a very rare printer's lapse, the error serves to aid Conrad, as in the reference to *Twelfth Night*, "as if anagrammatically, Viola, Olivia and Malvolia [*sic*] are contained in one another". In the strange phrase "Shelley anerotorically and Arielly starves the greedy organism", either the first adverb is meant to be "anorexically" or it has defeated the possibilities of Liddell and Scott. And it was surely Wagner, not Nietzsche, who called Beethoven's Seventh the apotheosis of the dance. Conrad generally understands Shakespeare better than the rest of us, if not indeed better than Shakespeare, but he falls into error when he says that "the key word in Jaques's account of the seven ages is his dismissive contention that men and women are *merely* players". The word italicized by Conrad means in context "no more than", ie that and nothing else. Any dismissiveness is a modern importation. The book sometimes handles foreign expressions in an odd manner. Conrad italicizes the word *littérateur*, but omits the accent; he bestows a redundant stress mark on Turgenev's "King Lear of the Steppes", who figures as "Khariöff" (Kharlov will do nicely). Twice he uses the phrase "begins *in medias res*": in the original, the adjective *medias* is an accusative case, and if an immobile verb is employed, then the logical form is "*In media re*" or (better) "*In mediis rebus*".

It ought to be apparent that the virtues of this astonishingly rich and thought-provoking account of literary history far outweigh any defects. It is almost wholly free from jargon; it manages total abstinence from the fodder of casebooks, and indeed does not refer to secondary criticism at all (though it has secretly picked things up from the biographies of Auden, for instance). It does not allow books to be occluded by unwanted "background", and instead it concerns itself with what actually goes on in these books. Virtues on a wider scale, these qualities will be of greatest benefit to that category of reader who has, alas, to some extent replaced Everyman: Everystudent (I deplore, not this group, but the common readers who seem to have gone). Every-student does need a smart one-liner, and Conrad provides those too. Shaw said that forcible utterance was the great secret of criticism, and Conrad possesses that. He may sometimes be wrong, but better to err with such a provocative critic than be right with the heavy engineers. Above all, Conrad has a genuine capacity for aesthetic response and a suppleness of expression to convey what he feels. I do not know any history of a single national literature which lives more generously in that literature; I wish that Conrad would now write a book on Byron, or Proust, or D'Annunzio – anyone really.

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Getting the message

Eugen Weber

PHILIPPE BOUTRY and JACQUES NASSIF
Martin L'Archange
386pp. Paris: Gallimard. 175fr.
2070704653

On a January afternoon in 1816, Thomas-Ignace Martin of Gallardon, near Chartres, was spreading manure in his field when a slight young man wearing a top hat and a long frock coat appeared beside him with a message for the king, then vanished into thin air. This, it eventually turned out, was the Archangel Raphael, "ange très célèbre auprès de Dieu", who nagged and bullied Martin until, two months after that first appearance, the *laboureur* was actually received by Louis XVIII: he was the first French peasant since Joan of Arc to carry a divine message to a king. After the interview, Martin was delivered of his visitor (the king, after all, was *roi thaumaturge*), but not from the notoriety in whose grip he would die eighteen years later, amid allegations that he had been poisoned.

The events are well documented: first because, on his way to the Tuileries, Martin had to run the gauntlet of several ecclesiastical dignitaries, of the redoubtable Decazes – royal minister and favourite – and of a spell in Charenton, under the observation of Dr Pinel and Dr Royer-Collard; then, because of his own (and others') recorded accounts of his adventures, which were widely circulated at the time and sporadically explored thereafter. Now, Jacques Nassif, a psychoanalyst, and Philippe Boutry, a historian, have exhumed the case and present it in the guise of an exchange of letters which progressively stretch the boundaries of explanation, not without some strain on the reader's credulity. The result is a leisurely discussion, wordy, speculative, more reminiscent of after-dinner conversation than of scholarly endeavour, teeming with subtle connections and tricky aperçus. The exploration carries us from the hypothetical machinations of tense times (White Terror, political instability) a few months after Waterloo, back to the Comte de Provence's alleged rancour against his brother (Louis XVI) and sister-in-law (Marie-Antoinette), and forward to 1833, when Martin endorsed the German impostor Naundorff, pretending to be Louis XVII, as true heir to the throne of France. For the message which the visionary in clogs carried to his king was not only the banal demand for national penitence and expiation of recent sins. He also revealed, or so he claimed after his interlocutors' death, Louis XVIII's own attempts to kill his brother and discredit his wife and progeny, shenanigans worthy of the house of Atraeus, as now of Freud and Lacan. I confess that I may have lost my way among the speculations, but it seemed that notions first advanced as hypotheses kept turning up as if they were proven facts.

Like other countries, early nineteenth-century France was awash in visionaries, prophets and assorted carriers of revelation. None got to see the king. So, the part of politics cannot be gainsaid in a paranoiac's progress from the beanfields of Beauce, by way of Charenton, to the Tuileries; then to the favour of *Ultra* salons. The book's political speculations are suggestive, and the historian-detective's hunt for sources fun to follow. Less so are the analyst's conjectures about Martin, let alone about Martin's father, of whom we still know very little after the analyst has finished his "reconstruction" of a figure whose private life is even more obscure than the son's, and after he has tried to place both in a rural context he partly misunderstands. Re-reading grim fairy stories would tell Nassif more about romarriage, step and sibling relations, adultery, pedlars and *cabaretiers* in an eighteenth-century village than psychiatry textbooks can.

The same goes for the hang-ups of the king, about which the text sometimes comes close to whimsy. As when Louis's alleged inversion is related to his association with the Constitutional Charter that he granted France (*la Charte – châtrer*), with the Maréchal de Castries (*idem*), and with the sensational gaol-break of Lavalette, a Bonapartist who escaped from prison dressed in woman's clothes.

The sceptical, fat old man in the Tuileries was certainly a complex character, caught up in webs woven a lifetime before. But Nassif's comments do not make me feel I understand him better, or his motives, or Martin's delusions and their evolution. Every apparent explanation turns into a pirouette out of explanation's way. Was Martin really trying to exorcize his father when he sermonized the king? Was he "a telepathic agent" of ambient terrors, nostalgias and guilts? Even Martin's "revelation" that Louis XVIII was not the true heir, but the envious brother, the spiteful brother-in-law, the perfidious uncle, re-enacts not so much psychological rituals as familiar folkloric themes. As does the peasant prophet's own progress. Which is not to say that explanations of that order would come closer to the truth. Only that, when miracles and madness are in cause, discretion is the better part of scholarship.

Bearing on the barons

W. L. Warren

THOMAS K. KEEFE
Feudal Assessments and the Political Community under Henry II and His Sons
291pp. University of California Press. £23.60.
0520045823

Anyone who finds the title of this book forbidding will not be reassured by a scrutiny of its contents: there are twenty-six tables and the appendices begin little more than half way through. Indeed, allowing for the tables there are few more than a hundred pages of text, and that in a prose so frequently technical as to deter all but the most persistent of readers. It is nevertheless, within the limitations of its subject-matter, a major contribution to the evaluation of the the Angevin kings' dealings with their barons, and in turn affects the interpretation of Magna Carta.

Historians have commonly argued that the Angevin kings pressed hard upon the feudal obligations of the barons to the Crown, but have had to content themselves with illustrative examples and impressionistic assessments. This is because the evidence, though copious, is fragmented and incomplete. Thomas K. Keefe, however, tackled the problem in a doctoral thesis, from which this book derives, and by the patient correlation of bits of dispersed data and the use of sophisticated statistical techniques has brought an unwonted precision to the subject.

For example, the most basic of feudal obligations, the knight service owed by the barons, is so incompletely known that it has been variously estimated at between 5,000 and 7,000. Keefe fixes it at close to 5,300. Many barons, however, had created more tenancies by knight service on their estates than they needed to discharge their military obligations to the Crown. Keefe reckons the total number of "knights' fees" in England at 7,525. In 1168 Henry II levied an obligatory financial aid from his barons and attempted to assess it not, as was customary, on the basis of the knight service owed to the Crown but upon the actual number of knights' fees created by the barons. This attempt to raise the assessment has generally been accounted a failure, or at least only a limited success. Keefe demonstrates that it was 87 per cent successful. On the other hand he argues that it was not a major cause of baronial discontent since (at least before the crisis years of King John's reign) taxation on the increased assessments was exceptional, and much latitude was allowed in paying. The greater barons often secured reductions or remission. Keefe can identify the greater barons as numbering sixty, who between them controlled 68.35 per cent of knights' fees in England. He further argues that historians have misled themselves about the burden of other financial levies on the barons, fastening upon what was demanded instead of the frequently smaller sums which were actually paid.

The statistical aspects of this book make it an indispensable work of reference for anyone who ventures into the field; but the value which Keefe himself puts on his researches and the conclusions he draws about "the political community" are seriously questionable. It is understandable that a researcher should inflate the significance of his findings and portray his cabbage-patch as growing a splendid crop of asparagus; it is less pardonable that he should write a book which fortifies self-esteem with tendentious arguments. Keefe seeks to establish his credentials as a radical critic of received opinion by putting up Aunt Sallies which he has no difficulty in demolishing. The "traditional" or "conventional" views that he criticizes are almost wholly of his own devising. So far from there being a traditional consensus, historical studies of the Angevin kings have been characterized by diversity of opinion; though, as is common in debate among historians, there is a trend to the winnowing out of less viable suggestions. The real value of Keefe's researches is to support with hard fact the better speculations of more recent historians.

Some of his arguments could seriously mislead the general reader or the inexperienced student. He holds up for criticism "the traditional view that a feudal society necessarily included an adversary relationship between the monarchy and the great magnates"; but this is a view so antiquated that one would not expect to find it outside a first-year student's essay. In contradicting it Keefe postulates a cosy relationship between king and greater barons and a high level of co-operation in the governance of the realm. The arguments in support are seriously flawed. He claims that "the king was intent on drawing members of the feudal elite into his court", but cites only those occasions (such as the promulgation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, or the treaty with the King of Scots) when a "full court" was to be expected and the barons duty-bound to attend. He generalizes wildly from the few instances of greater barons who actively participated in royal government. Of course there was co-operation, but much better evidence for it, which he ignores, is the major legal reforms which required baronial assent, Keefe's financial evidence provides a clue to how co-operation was achieved, but a minor clue, for it is a curious kind of patronage which saddles the barons with debt and then favours some by remitting payment. Much more important was the compromise by which the Crown was allowed to extend its jurisdiction over freemen but retreated from interfering in landlords' jurisdiction over the unfree, and conceded widening powers of lesser local government.

The book is handsomely produced, but there are some disconcerting misprints. There are errors for which the author must be responsible: a treaty is "signed" instead of sealed; the title "prince" is anachronistically applied to a king's son. Important barons are mis-identified: William de Tancarville, hereditary chamberlain of Normandy, appears as "William Chamberlain of Tancarville". More seriously, it is regrettable that the extensive annotation on which the invaluable statistical analysis rests is gathered into sixty pages of notes instead of being at the foot of the page.

The ten essays by Walther Hubatsch that comprise his *Studies in Medieval and Modern German History* (199pp. Macmillan. £15. 0 333 36235 7) range in time from the early Middle Ages to the Second World War, and derive in the main from lectures and discussions at Cambridge University. Among the topics considered are: "German Crusader Castles in the Near East", "Frederick the Great and the Problem of *Raison d'état*", "Stein and Constitutional Reform in Nineteenth-Century Germany", "The Berlin Congress of 1878", "Hindenberg as *Reichspräsident* of the Weimar Republic" and "The Norwegian Campaign, 1940: Strategy in Critical Retrospect".

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Inexorable crimes

H. R. Kedward

MAGNUS LINKLATER, ISABEL HILTON and NEAL ASCHERSON
The Fourth Reich: Klaus Barbie and the neo-fascist connection
352pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0 340 34443 1
LADISLAS DE HOYOS
Klaus Barbie: The untold story
Translated by Nicholas Courtin
310pp. W. H. Allen. £10.95.
0491 03043 6
TOM BOWER
Klaus Barbie: Butcher of Lyons
255pp. Michael Joseph. £10.95.
0 7181 2327 1
JOHN BEATTIE
The Life and Career of Klaus Barbie: An eyewitness record
219pp. Methuen. Paperback, £2.50.
0 413 54170 3

With his trial in Lyons repeatedly postponed, the story of the Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie is still unfinished. The last chapter lies, in John Beattie's words, "tantalizingly hidden over the horizon". Just how tantalizing depends on a variety of expectations, most of which find some expression in each of these four books. If there is to be a show trial, many people believe that more than Klaus Barbie and his sadistic cruelty should be put on display. What about the "other decent Germans" who staffed the bureaucratic machinery of the Nazi SS? Or the French collaborators who often took the lead in rounding up the Jews in France for deportation? Will there be a revelation of the identity of the French Resister, or Resisters, who betrayed Jean Moulin to the German occupiers? Will the full story of the American Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) who employed and protected Barbie after the war and secured his escape to a new life of intrigue and brutality in Bolivia be allowed to emerge? Will the whole panoply of fascist and neo-fascist terrorism in Europe and South America (and South Africa?) be on trial?

I myself have few expectations of the trial beyond that of establishing the grim details of Barbie's two years of torture and murder in occupied Lyons. The facts of the mutilation and torture he inflicted on Resisters are extremely well known since some of his victims, unlike Jean Moulin, survived. So too are the facts of his mass killings, his ruthless deportation of Jewish children to their death, and his shooting of the prisoners held in the appalling conditions of Montluc prison whenever he felt like making an example to the people of Lyons and the surrounding countryside. What the trial will set out to do is to establish the causal links between these atrocities and Barbie himself and thus satisfy the legalistic demands of a cautious jurisprudence, leaving the wider story outside France, and indeed within it – the plots, the scandals, the cover-ups and the nature of fascism then and now – to books such as these. Where the prosecuting counsel stops, the investigative journalists take over, though in these four cases they were there first.

The first effect of reading these books is to lose any lingering illusion that anything in history ever happens by chance, such is the inexorable pattern of interlocking political crime and military terror which the authors trace from the Third Reich to the dictatorships of South and Central America. Still further, for those who have a sneaking suspicion that conspiracy theories do, after all, unlock historical events, more than ample evidence is provided. All the leading conspirators, from heads of government downwards – the organizations and networks, the hit-squads, the mercenary agents – are here. Their shared political pedigree on the extreme right is positively established. Only the social and economic dimensions are missing, and although an occasional sentence in *The Fourth Reich*, the best of the four books, suggests there is more to politics than personalities, the connection, just as inexorable as the careers of individuals, is not made between the kind of society which produced the Third Reich and those societies which nurture and promote the tyrannies of Latin America.

Klaus Barbie was twenty-nine when he became head of the Gestapo in Lyons in 1942. He was thus still a young man when he was taken under the wing of the American CIC and used in its Cold War designs in post-war Germany. He was only thirty-seven when he began a totally fresh, but consistent, career as a confidence trickster, arms smuggler, government spy and blackmailer in Bolivia. Even before any of these careers, he can be found as a very young informant for the Nazi police and a committed idealist in the junior ranks of the SS. Such continuous involvement in state-run organizations of terror and counter-espionage testifies to the enormous professional skill of Barbie. His life is a paradigm of the professional fascist, and the authors consistently describe him as the ultimate, or average, henchman, the typical sadist, the clinical torturer or the bureaucrat of licensed crime. In many other jobs his colourless personality would have relegated him to obscurity, and it is to the credit of all these writers that none of them tries to titillate the readers with spurious accounts of Nazi orgies and perversions on which Barbie might have been expected to thrive. He had a happy marriage and was a devoted father. When first his son was killed in 1981 and then his wife died a year later, his own health declined and his resolve to fight the growing demand for his extradition collapsed. It will be the defending counsel, not the defendant himself, who will give flamboyance to the trial.

The sober tone of *The Fourth Reich* is exactly right for the subject. The proliferation of names and connections testifies to the wealth of material assembled by the international team of authors and their listed associates, all of whom have used archival documentation and oral evidence skilfully and with due concern not to solve all the enigmas at once. The title itself is an over-dramatic rendering of the German presence in South America, though it remains an acceptable way of evoking the power of Nazi exiles, like Barbie himself, neo-fascist mercenaries such as the Italian assassin Stefano delle Chiaie, and the autochthonous brutality of the dictators themselves when all are joined together in a single political system. Sometimes the book strains credibility in its linking of so many fascist thugs across so many borders, and yet the picture of the Belgian Rexist Léon Degrelle playing the elder statesman to the neo-fascist nihilists of Ordine Nuovo, whose path to South America ran through his place of exile in Franco's Spain, must be accepted as typical of post-war fascist activity. In many ways fascism has been more international since the death of Hitler and Mussolini than it was in the heyday of their power.

In the complex drama of criminality and counter-intelligence which allowed Barbie to escape detection and trial after the war, all four books are clear on the role of the American CIC. Using the official archives of the Corps, made available under the American Freedom of Information Act, the authors of *The Fourth Reich* find the CIC guilty of gross lies and a flagrant flaunting of the codes of justice to which their own government was committed. It is clear that the CIC had general, if not detailed, evidence of Barbie's inhumanity in Lyons, but saw this as no reason to give up their useful anti-communist informer, nor even to admit his identity to the authorities above them, let alone the French. Of all the plots and subplots in this book this episode is handled by the authors in an explicitly judgmental way: the CIC is roundly condemned. By contrast, they are delicately inconclusive on the question of whether or not the Resister René Hardy betrayed Jean Moulin. Hardy has been acquitted twice by French courts, and if his case were to be reopened it could only be to allow the chief witness for the prosecution to testify in person. That witness is, of course, Klaus Barbie, who claims to have "turned" Hardy, but all four books will have been written in vain if anybody still retains any faith in the veracity of Barbie's word.

And yet is Ladislas de Hoyos one of those who wants the Hardy case reopened? De Hoyos was the journalist who interviewed Barbie in 1971 and filmed him for French television, thereby confirming his existence in Bolivia; his *Klaus Barbie: The untold story* was first published in France in 1984. He tells his version of the story with a good deal of emphasis on information gained from face-to-face interviews, and publishes in an appendix the text of an earlier interview with Barbie conducted in fairly mysterious circumstances by Louis Bilbes in 1948. The presence of so much dubious Barbie testimony is a curious finale, since it relates almost entirely to the first Hardy trial and barely at all to Barbie's own activities. It gives the book a sting in the tail, even though the account of Hardy's role in the events surrounding Moulin's arrest is given earlier in the book with balance and discretion. The weakness here, as elsewhere in the book, is that de Hoyos falls short of the standards of clarity normally expected of a successful journalist.

By contrast Tom Bower is admirably clear and succinct in his *Klaus Barbie: Butcher of Lyons* and his evidence has been well researched and digested. His scenario is not as ambitious as that of *The Fourth Reich*, but the book compares well with the more extensive version. He gives relatively more space to the tireless efforts of Beate and Serge Klarsfeld to bring Barbie to justice, and this aspect of the story is well covered in John Beattie's much shorter account, which is less perceptive than the others but none the less tells its gruesome story with a good deal of verve and directness.

Four books on one sadistic Nazi all at the same time? Is this not to give an "average henchman" far too much of the stage? Unfortunately not. The tragedy of the twentieth century largely consists in the fact that such people have held the centre stage for far too long, and in many parts of the world continue to do so.

The Winner

As a rival he was unassailable:
eating from her fingers,
lounging on her bed,
canvassing attention
with his upturned, obscene,
bald stomach.

When at last I despatched him
he lay, mingling his pelt
with the hearthrug,
unmoving but complacent,
knowing that his last gasp
was the *coup de grâce*.

CONNIE BENSLEY

THE P.E.N. ANTHOLOGIES

The English Centre of P.E.N., in partnership with Quartet Books, will be publishing a short story anthology, P.E.N. New Fiction II which will appear in January 1987. The aim as always with P.E.N. anthologies is to encourage new writers, so approximately one-third of the volume will be devoted to well known writers and two-thirds to the work of the new or the less well known.

Unpublished stories (not more than two per person) written in English by British and Commonwealth writers or residents, should be sent to The Editor, P.E.N. NEW FICTIONS, The English Centre of P.E.N., 7 Dilke Street, London SW3 4JE by December 31st 1985.

Stories must be typewritten, have the writer's name and address on the title page and should not exceed 4,500 words. No acknowledgements will be sent and stories will not be returned. All correspondence must be accompanied by a S.A.E.

Quartet Books Limited

Comrades in art

Paul Thompson

ALAN CRAWFORD
C. R. Ashbee: Architect, designer and romantic socialist
499pp. Yale University Press. £35.
0300034679

C. R. Ashbee, although long recognized as a crucial link in the chain between English romanticism and modern Western design, has always been overshadowed by the two men who most inspired him, William Morris and Edward Carpenter. And in terms of influence and achievement he remains, even after this biography, a lesser figure. Nevertheless, this is an outstanding book: beautifully designed and printed, splendidly illustrated, and a pleasure to read – closely observed, humanly sensitive, shrewd, unpedantic but remarkably well informed and researched. Writing about Ashbee implies following extraordinarily diverse trails – from bisexual marriage to embossed leather or medieval enamels, from Whitechapel or Chicago to the alleyways of old Jerusalem – and their pursuit has taken Alan Crawford fifteen years. It has also given him time to reflect on Ashbee in a way that Ashbee himself, despite his fifty volumes of diaries and six typescript volumes of memoirs, never succeeded in doing.

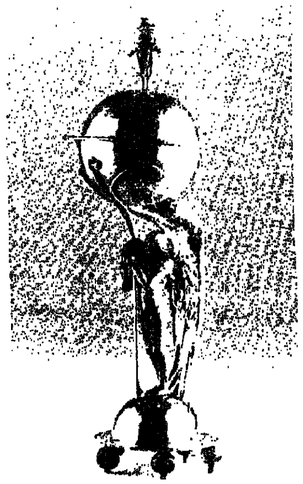
He now claims our attention not only as an artist-architect and social reformer but also, very specifically, as a man. The story of his personal life as unfolded here is fascinating, and for its period exceptionally explicit, even though, especially at the beginning and end, some important questions remain. Charles Robert was the only boy and eldest of four children of Henry Spencer and Elizabeth Ashbee, both of whom came from well-established Hamburg–London merchant trading families. Behind the stiff, conventional façade of a successful city business man Henry Ashbee led another life. He developed into a passionate collector of erotic books, which he kept away from the family home in his private flat in Gray's Inn. Eventually, under a pseudonym, he became the foremost bibliographer of erotica in Victorian Britain. So much is certain. He, and the literary friends who sat at his Gray's Inn dinner-table, may have remained in spirit "a group of boys at a boarding school poring over girlie magazines", but the Ashbee family had its doubts and suspected that he kept a mistress and second family in Paris. Whatever the truth, it became too much for Elizabeth and in 1893 she separated formally from her husband. The son sided with his mother. His father cut him out of his will and they never spoke again.

The conflict had already determined C. R. Ashbee's path. He had refused to join the family firm and in 1883 he went up to Cambridge instead. He emerged a cultural rebel and confirmed homosexual, having discovered not only Ruskin and Morris but also Edward Carpenter. Sex reformer as well as socialist, living with his working-man lover on a smallholding near Sheffield, Carpenter influenced Ashbee with his ideal of a cross-class "new freemasonry" of homosexuals who, inspired by the Ancient Greeks and Shakespeare, could be the master-builders of a new industrial society. Ashbee went down from Cambridge to Toynbee Hall in the East End of London with "Edward's idea still burning within me", and in his Guild of Handicraft he began to create what was indeed a very special and creative relationship with young working-class men. He had found the strength and "helpful love" with which to "destroy the family ghost".

He helped his mother to establish herself independently, building a house for her by the river in Chelsea which became his own second home: a place where he could play the role of critic and dandy in London's bohemia. Like his father he lived in two worlds and was probably never entirely at ease in either. Then in 1897, at the age of thirty-four, he met a serious and solitary seventeen-year-old Kent stockbroker's daughter, Janet Godden. Originally she thought him a pompous joke "clouded with his own conceit" and she was astonished when he proposed to her. With what was to prove characteristic sensibleness, she thought it through and decided to marry him. Ashbee tried to explain the kind of "comradeship" that he intended – the same "intensely close and all-absorbing personal attachment" as for "my men and boy friends. . . . You are the first and only woman to whom I have felt I could offer the same loyal reverence." Some women, he warned her, "would take this and perhaps rightly as a sign of coldness to their sex". But the compensation was that while "there may be many comrade friends, there can be only one comrade wife!" There were indeed to be many "comrade friends". Later on Janet tolerated them as a way of keeping up her difficult, restless husband's spirits. But at this point she did not understand. She found Ashbee's apparent lack of sexuality safe. He was drawn to her tomboyishness, and once they were married she became confidante and mother figure to his Guildsmen. It was only slowly that she came to feel that something was lacking.

After seven years the marriage was still unconsummated, and Janet – desperate for motherhood ("anything but this temperate gentle touch") fell in love with a Garden City enthusiast, spent two holidays with him, then collapsed in a nervous breakdown. Ashbee took her back, and together they conceived the first of their four children in a marriage based at last on a real understanding of each other: so much so that when he subsequently took a Grenadier Guardsman on holiday in France she could write – tearfully – to "bless you both", in part repayment "in kind" of Ashbee's "understanding and generosity of five years ago".

Not that Ashbee had become an easy husband. He still left Janet and her children at home in the Cotswold countryside for months on end while he travelled abroad. Sometimes she wondered if he was really "one flesh and blood – or merely a pen behind a brain with intellect. . . . What is 'Your love to us all' – sometimes I feel I want a little tenderness so dreadfully I feel I want to hurt you and *make* you feel something, if only pain. . .". Undoubtedly the fact that the children were all girls did not help. Ashbee had wanted a son intensely: "Let it be David, oh let it be David", he chanted before each succeeding birth. Yet, in his own way, he proved a rather positive kind of father. He treated his daughters as equals and showed the same kind of ability in



A salt cup in silver and amber, designed by Ashbee, 1899; reproduced from the book reviewed here.

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other unconventional ways, such as in his relationships with East End boys. "He had an extraordinary power of getting to know people, particularly the young, of drawing them out, and making them feel, however great the gap of age or circumstances, that they were worth listening to." But outside such intimate relationships, especially in the wider middle-class world, Ashbee remained aloof and reserved. He would more often lecture and pontificate than listen. And this double life within him proved, in his public career, both his strength and his weakness.

As architect, pioneer town planner and artist-craftsman Ashbee produced many beautiful things of great variety, scattered across the world and perceptively described in this book. Yet he never consistently led any of the fields in which he participated. In part this was a reflection of his restless temperament; in part of the commercial waning and eventual failure of the Guild of Handicraft after he moved it from the inner city to the country in 1902. But it was also because success in design for its own sake was not his primary concern. He believed in the unity of craft and fine art, and he wanted to help to recreate an art that was a part of daily life. It is this idea which links his best work. The brick houses in Chelsea of which he was both architect and builder were above all notable for their sense of place, their village irregularity. His furniture was joiner's work put together like boxes of planks, and then decorated with coloured inlays or metals; his copper and silverware visibly hammered, the strange constructional loops of its handles and bases its characteristic decoration. The books of Essex House Press, printed on William Morris's own former machines and with the help of two of Morris's compositors, echoed the craft standards of the Kelmscott Press. Ashbee's especially original informal jewellery, in which he employed enamel and metalwork and unfinished pearls, choosing the elements for their "artistic quality" rather than the "commercial cost of the materials", was inspired by the *botteghe* of Renaissance Florence where artist-craftsmen such as Donatello, Ghiberti and Cellini had worked. And appropriately, his most important single work was arguably through his role as town planner of Jerusalem after the capture of the city from the Turks in 1917. It was primarily through his vision that the old city was protected and brought back to life as a centre for craft industries, its great vaulted medieval bazaars restored and reopened, the open valley to the east protected and the gardens around the old city walls begun.

Art as part of daily life had been central to the vision which Ashbee took from William Morris. In contrast to Morris, however, he saw himself as a "practical idealist". He was more interested in cross-class contact than in class conflict, and he was not prepared to wait for the creation of a revolutionary socialist society in order to attempt to revive craft production. When he put his plan for a school of art and craft to Morris, suggesting hopefully that "thus I too work with you in the overthrow of society", Morris was unconvinced and told him flatly that "the weapon is too small to be of any value". As it happened, Ashbee turned out not to be very practical anyway. His education schemes proved short-lived because he quarrelled with the local authorities who funded them. He could never find many clients, either as an architect or as a town planner. Most serious of all – and in striking contrast to Morris's own practical success – he so lacked concern for the market that he completely failed to find a secure economic basis for either the Essex House Press or the Guild of Handicraft. As a result his life's work in the craft world, for which he cared above all, had, in 1907 when he was only forty-four, effectively ended. By the time he reached sixty he was already retired.

In the long run what has counted has been not so much what Ashbee did, but the spirit in which he undertook to do things. He was indeed a "practical idealist" in the sense that, although he wrote and spoke a great deal, his ideas were never very well expressed in the abstract, but instead came to life in his practical experiments. He keeps his place in history especially for two reasons. The first is as a transitional figure between the Gothic revival and the modern movement. He was a champion of crafts who at the same time acknowledged the machine as the essential "basis of social reconstruction". He had served as architectural pupil to the foremost medievalist among late Victorian architects, G.F. Bodley, and yet when he went to Chicago in 1900 he immediately recognized the little-known Frank Lloyd Wright as "far and away the ablest man in our line of work" in the United States, and spotted in the steel-framed office towers within the Loop the hope of the future. "Chicago is the only American city I have seen where something absolutely distinctive in the aesthetic handling of material has been evolved out of the industrial system." It was principally Ashbee – who was probably more highly esteemed among the Viennese avant-garde than he ever was in England – who introduced Wright to Europe.

The second reason is more challenging. Ashbee did indeed look beyond industrialism to a new social order, in which every man or woman could be an artist, rather than a puppet twitched by factory and market between drudgery and sensationalism. He retained the fundamental belief, which he took from Morris, that "the great neglected power for creation lay in men's hands", and he succeeded in demonstrating that in the practices of the Guild of Handicraft (which were quite unconnected with its failure in the market). He showed that it was possible to recruit working-class boys whose only qualification was eagerness to learn, and train them to become effective craftsmen and designers. He showed that artisan experiment could still be part of the design process, and that giving men time to think and a share in the running of the workshop could make economic sense. And he successfully broke not only class barriers, but also the division between work and leisure, in the Guild's regular suppers, picnics, plays and camping holidays. The Guild was the most radical of the workshops of the Arts and Crafts movement, something genuinely new, an important pioneering demonstration of the possibilities of co-operative production. In the society of his time, perhaps only a man of Ashbee's personal strengths – and the weaknesses that went with them – could have achieved this.

Top marks

Christopher Reid

WILLIAM PACKER
Henry Moore: An illustrated biography
184pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
029778496 X

William Packer's treatment of his subject in the text for *Henry Moore* is gingerly and respectful. Perhaps this is inevitable in a volume designed to memorialize a great artist who is still alive. Packer begins with a brisk account of Moore's Yorkshire childhood and ends with a chapter entitled "Apotheosis". What apotheosis amounts to here is international fame, a spate of retrospectives, the chance to exchange words with the Queen (there is a photograph of one such non-event) and the continuation on Moore's part of a steadily productive routine in defiance of the demands that are made on the time and energy of any public figure. "Business as Usual" might have been a better title, for the fact is that, while he has achieved the highest human eminence, Moore is not yet – thank goodness – among the clouds.

When he is, we may hope that a biographer will appear with the critical equipment to penetrate to the heart of Moore's creative personality. Meanwhile, here is a life that gives us some of the facts. It's blandness can, however, be exasperating. Of Moore's stint at the Leeds School of Art, for example, Packer says: "It is evident that he was a most serious and energetic student, cheerfully engrossed in the life of the school" – and this is not the only occasion on which he adopts the style of an end-of-term report. We are left wanting to know much more about Moore's childhood, marriage and friendships than Packer, with justifiable discretion, is prepared to let out of the bag. Less justifiable is the paucity of critical comment. At one point Moore's youthful opinion that "it is modelling that has sapped the manhood out of Western sculture [*sic*]" is quoted, but there is no adequate discussion of the criticism which has been levelled at Moore by less reverential spirits, to the effect that his own work suffered badly when he abandoned the practice of direct carving in favour of initiating projects with plaster maquettes.

Social sittings

Joesph Darracott

KEITH CLEMENTS
Henry Lamb: The artist and his friends
305pp. Bristol: Redcliffe. £16.50.
090545955 5

Henry Lamb's popular fame rests on his portrait of Lytton Strachey. Indeed, the lank, red-bearded figure sitting by a tall studio window with a view of Hampstead Heath is unforgettable. Keith Clements points out that the picture was carefully prepared and slowly executed. He regretfully admits that many of Lamb's later sitters did not receive the same attention, so accounting for the artist's uneven reputation. The qualities of the Strachey portrait are "ironic and detached", as Frances Spalding has it, and are particularly apt for a Bloomsbury figure. But irony tended not to be an acceptable attribute for other portraits, whose sitters come from various areas of British society.

Many of his sitters came from the universities. Lamb knew the milieu from childhood, for his father was Professor of Mathematics at Manchester, and before he turned to painting Lamb himself had studied medicine there, but soon gave it up and escaped to London with his girl friend, Nina Forrest – better known by her nickname, "Euphemia" – often a subject for him and other artists. They married in 1906, when a child was expected, but she miscarried. For the next twenty years they lived separate lives. Lamb led a bohemian existence in Chelsea and Montparnasse, with intervals in Brittany and Ireland, and a spell as an army doctor during the war. His own personal life continued unsettled until his second marriage in 1928 to Lady Pansy Pakenham.

Clements focuses the chapters of his book on Lamb's friends. Thus we see Augustus John, Lytton Strachey and Stanley Spencer from new angles, while Boris Anrep and George Kennedy emerge from the shadows: Lady Ottoline Morrell has a chapter to herself, as Lamb (in competition with Bertrand Russell) had an affair with her. She was much taken with him: "I had not hitherto met anyone like him, and I was intensely interested and attracted by him, for he had the rare combination of intellectual activity and the experience of artistic Bohemian life."

The second half of Lamb's career was more sedate, but his prosaic work as a Second World War artist never matched his First World War masterpiece, "Irish Troops in the Judean Hills". He became a prolific portraitist and a respected Royal Academician, and Clements rightly praised his fine draughtsmanship and fluency as a painter, especially well shown in intimate paintings such as the study of his wife (1933), included among the illustrations here. Lamb throughout his life attracted friends: in Keith Clements he has found a diligent and kindly advocate.

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Principles made palatable

John Campbell

MICHAEL RUSTIN
For a Pluralist Socialism
277pp. Verso. £18.50 (paperback, £5.95).
086091074 1

For the best part of forty years, since the war-assisted tide of 1945 receded, the dilemma for the Labour Party has been how to be both socialist and electable. Harold Wilson won elections by scarcely even pretending to be socialist. Michael Foot presided helplessly over a party that did not bother to look as if it wanted to be elected. Now it again has a leader whose overriding priority is to get elected but who faces, as Wilson never did, on the one hand, an uncompromising minority more concerned with keeping the Party committed to fundamentalist goals and, on the other hand, a strong third party which on the most optimistic forecast is likely to prevent Labour winning an overall majority of seats in the House of Commons. While Neil Kinnock gives the impression that all he wants is for the ideologues to pipe down and the Alliance to go away, his urgent need is for a coherent strategy that will recognize the reality of Labour's position, outline a programme for government which might both attract votes and command support from the Alliance in a hung Parliament, and dress it up in the appropriate language to persuade the left that it involves no betrayal but a principled step towards the eventual achievement of socialism. Michael Rustin's *For a Pluralist Socialism* impressively fulfils all three requirements. In addition it is outstandingly well written. For once, the concepts of the sociologist are deployed in robust and fluent English, so that the argument carries one along irresistibly.

As important is the refreshing realism of the argument itself. Rustin is by no means the first to point out that Labour's working-class base has declined to a platform too narrow ever again to sustain by itself an election victory. The writing was on the wall as long ago as 1959, and he pays tribute to Eric Hobsbawm's famous article on the same theme, "The Forward March of Labour Halted?", written in 1978. But what is fresh about Rustin is that instead of simply bemoaning the fact and urging, like most of those who would "modernize" the Party's image, that Labour must broaden its appeal – with the implication, inevitably resisted by the left, that it compromise its belief in socialism – he wants the Party to accept the fragmentation of its old constituency, to embrace a pluralist concept of society and make a virtue of it. To this end, in a somewhat shameless but nevertheless apparently sincere rediscovery of principle under the pressure of expediency, he urges Labour to adopt Proportional Representation – "not only", as he puts it, "on the normative ground required by an authentic belief in democracy . . . but also on grounds of political advantage to Labour and the working class".

The resulting political advantage is both tactical and strategic. In the short term it is simply Labour's best way back to power: in the likely event of a hung Parliament it would virtually oblige the Alliance to back or join a Labour Government, and in return for PR Labour could extort good terms in other areas. (Rustin thinks it might even detach the Liberals from the hated SDP.) More important to his central argument, however, is the belief that in the long term, by embracing PR, Labour would once again be able to project itself as the democratic party standing for the widest possible right to vote and to participate at every level from its own internal elections through trade union ballots to local and regional government and an elected House of Lords. (Arthur Scargill's self-defeating denial of the right to vote, in this analysis, mirrors his doomed appeal to Labour's union roots in taking the Party in precisely the wrong direction.) By reclaiming democracy for Labour, Rustin would hope simultaneously to recover all those other civic virtues of equality, fairness, mutual supportiveness and sense of common citizenship and social integration on which the British used to pride themselves. Invoking Gramsci, he argues that by these means Labour could not merely forge a new electoral majority across the classes but begin to replace the dominant capitalist "hegemony" of competitive individualism with a "counter-hegemony of the left" to be fostered by combining the common aspirations – while respecting the diversity – of all the class, interest, sex and ethnic groups at present alienated from organized labour, though instinctively opposed to Thatcherism.

In the long term, Rustin has no doubt, the socialist organization of society, in the sense of State planning of the economy and increasing international integration and co-operation, is still inevitable: Thatcherism and Reaganomics are a reactionary blip on the graph of progress. There is in his prescription no dilution of Labour's historic goals: on the contrary, not since Aneurin Bevan has anyone made it sound so natural, so reasonable, so obvious that free people must eventually, by democratic means, assert their control over the faceless financial interests that now rule them. The prerequisite of any advance, however, is to mobilize a majority against Mrs Thatcher; and to this end Rustin has the courage to sweep away most of the anti-democratic, sectarian nonsense that currently makes Labour unelectable. In a series of practical and realistic chapters on specific problems that would face an incoming progressive government – in a futuristic afterword he postulates Mrs Thatcher's defeat by a Labour–Alliance coalition in 1988 – Rustin offers policies on employment, industrial democracy, education, regional devolution and even Northern Ireland which at the very least are worth serious consideration by all three anti-Conservative parties. That is the measure of the book's skill: it keeps eventual socialism in its sights, while offering an attractive strategy for Labour's immediate need.

The end of an era

Ben Pimlott

MARTIN HOLMES
The Labour Government, 1974–79: Political aims and economic reality
206pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333367359

One of the merits of Martin Holmes's short study, which chronicles Harold Wilson's last years in office and the brief term of James Callaghan, is that it reminds us of the speed of political change. How different the atmosphere now from then! How different the perceptions of political parties! Those were the days when the Labour left was Neil Kinnock, when party managers were worried sick about the SNP, when columnists wondered urgently whether the Tory Party as we knew it could long survive, when Labour was set fair to become the natural party of government. Those too were the days when Harold Wilson, before and even after his unforced resignation ("I felt near to tears", wrote Barbara Castle. "It's a very emotional moment", replied Eric Varley), was the most popular politician in Britain, revered by ministerial colleagues, Labour Party rank-and-file and televiewing public alike.

It is useful to have such things brought to mind. The main purpose of this book, however, is not to look at parties or personalities but at economic policy. Despite the promise in the title to examine the "political aims" of the government, these are largely ignored when they are not directly economic. Northern Ireland, education, the social services, pensions, housing, foreign affairs and defence are scarcely touched on. The omission of assessments in such key areas of socialist concern is relevant to the general conclusions of the book because the author chooses to judge (on the whole unfavourably) the government's overall performance.

This is an "academic" book, so there are reference notes. These are revealing. The main sources are newspapers, about two dozen recent books (often quoted verbatim and at length) and interviews. Mr Holmes is a *Guardian* reader: more than thirty of his references are to that paper, with only a dozen or so to the whole of the rest of the press put together. Although writing about a Labour government, he makes no use of the extensive journalistic and periodical literature of the labour movement and the left. He thanks "the many Labour Cabinet ministers, junior ministers, MPs, trade-union leaders and civil servants" who agreed to be interviewed, but (though there are some references to anonymous ministers and officials) the names of only sixteen interviewees appear in the notes (Albert Booth, Robert Sheldon, Neil Kinnock, Stan Orme, Jack Jones, Ian Mikardo, Reg Prentice, Lords Scanlon and Wilson, Joe Ashton, Jeremy Bray, Joel Barnett, Dennis Skinner, Lords Lever and Peart, and Peter Jay). If Healey, Callaghan, Short, Foot, Owen, Jenkins, Castle, Rees, Silkin, Williams, Varley, Benn or Shore – former Cabinet members who might have had valuable things to say – were approached, they either refused to talk, or else refused to be cited. Back-bench opinion was barely tapped at all. "Trade unionists" seems to mean Jones and Scanlon, "MPs" (other than ex-ministers) Ashton, Bray, Kinnock, Skinner. Holmes does not appear to have spoken to Stuart Holland, architect of many of Labour's most adventurous, if ill-fated, economic plans, or to have used any of his books.

In other words this book is not research, but narrative and argument quite narrowly based. The author's contention is that Labour's allegedly excessive anxiety about unemployment rather than inflation exacerbated difficulties inherited from the Heath years; that "the IMF deal was the last nail in the coffin of Croslandism"; that the post-war consensus ended when monetarist policies were adopted by Healey and Callaghan in 1976; that a change in attitude and ideology which followed Wilson's departure was "possibly the most profound in contemporary British politics since that engendered by the 1945–51 Labour Government", leading directly to Thatcherism and eventually pushing the Labour Party into an ideological no man's land; and, finally, that the level of unemployment reached by the end of the government's term (1.3 million, or 5.5 per cent) "scarcely represents an economic imbalance meriting such policies as inflating the economy which penalise the 94.5 per cent" – an opinion that fairly reflects the values which infuse the book as a whole.

The subject-matter is important and much of what Holmes says – even at his most tendentious – is interesting. He displays a notable ability to summarize economic detail and debate, and his perceptions are, on occasion, shrewd – as, for example, his observation that, like voters in 1945 remembering pre-war unemployment, electors in 1979 based their attitudes on past, but not forgotten, peaks of hyper-inflation. He says much that is not specious about changes in ideas.

The trouble is a refusal to get to grips with the political relationships which inspire and inform them. Such impatience or incomprehension is especially visible in a far too brief discussion of party politics. "To advocate the view that the working-class has no preordained right to political power," he declares, "or that social class is not a matter of merit, or that matters of good and evil cut across class divisions, is to put forward an unpopular view in the Labour Party which draws disapproval." It would be unfair to suggest that the book is no stronger than one of its weaker links. Nevertheless, Martin Holmes's reluctance to step away from the higher theory that really interests him, and look seriously at a wider political environment, results in a lack of finesse that talking to or reading a few policy advisers, journalists and activists other than the best known, might have prevented.

November Books

Non-Fiction

FRANK SINATRA, MY FATHER
Nancy Sinatra
A revealing, intimate portrait of a great singer and famous man by his daughter — the first account of Sinatra's life, loves and music by a member of his own family.
Illustrated £17.95

THE NEW NAKED MANAGER
Robert Heller
A comprehensively revised edition of the highly respected management guide *The Naked Manager*, updated to incorporate the experiences and lessons of the past decade. £12.95

SHACKLETON
Roland Huntford
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Fiction

THE MAMMOTH HUNTERS
Jean M. Auel
The long-awaited third novel in the author's outstandingly successful Earth's Children series, following *The Clan of the Cave Bear* and *The Valley of Horses*. £10.95

THE BLACK DWARF
Michael Molloy
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DEAD FOR A DUCAT
Laurence Payne
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Supreme power, more or less

John Keegan

ANTHONY KENNY
The Logic of Deterrence
103pp. Firethorn. Paperback, £4.95.
0947752072

Anthony Kenny, the Master of Balliol, has produced two remarkable books in quick succession. The first, an autobiography (reviewed in the *TLS* on June 14), recounted how he migrated from the life of a Catholic parish priest to that of an Oxford philosophy don, shedding his religious beliefs in the process while retaining the moral preoccupations that had originally drawn him into the priestly life. The second – a brief examination of the morality of nuclear deterrence – is a logical product of his change of position. It concerns, in the best tradition of Catholic moral philosophy, an acutely immediate issue, is deeply informed by traditional Catholic thinking, but juxtaposes Christian and humanist values in a way that exactly reflects his own intellectual evolution.

With a great deal of what he has to say no well-meaning and right-thinking reader could disagree. Indeed, Dr Kenny is at pains to point out that there is much common ground even between those who denounce each other's way of life and system of thought. Thus both the Soviet and the United States leaderships have at different times conceded that nuclear wars cannot be won and ought not to be fought; both condemn attack on civilian populations and both are committed to measures of nuclear disarmament. Kenny would go much further. He, like the Catholic bishops of the United States, questions the morality of national strategies based on the premiss of deterrence by the threat of mutual mass destruction. But, while the bishops concluded that the use of the threat must be tolerated in the short term, while effective disarmament is negotiated, he wishes to remove the threat – though not the apparatus of deterrence – as an immediate first step both towards substantive disarmament and to the making of that morally right relationship which, even if it were initially one-sided, he believes to be its necessary condition.

The crux of the Kenny proposal may be stated as follows: accepting that it is impracticable politically and unsafe strategically to renounce nuclear weapons, and that mutual and progressive disarmament has proved to be unnegotiable, let one side – in this case ours, since it is the only one on which our persuasions may be brought to bear – affirm that it will never use its nuclear weapons against populations or military targets close to population centres; and, to lend the affirmation international credibility, let the personnel of the nuclear forces, while continuing to maintain their weapons and training in their use, be bound by orders never to accept commands from anyone to employ them on unacceptable or unknown targets. In short, were the President of the United States to order the nuclear bombardment of Moscow, let us have servicemen so trained that they would refuse to obey his command.

This proposal is not as far-fetched as it may seem; servicemen are already trained not to employ nuclear weapons except in circumstances where they are satisfied, and declare their satisfaction, that the order is legitimate. The proposal, moreover, would certainly transform the moral posture of a nuclear power and of the individuals its government employs to implement its strategy. But would it – and this is the question that Kenny does not address – transform the moral climate of international relations?

The United States and the Soviet Union, as is often said, are bound to each other in a way that is both symmetrical and unique. No other pair of states is similarly restrained in what they can and cannot do to each other. But the restraint is not simply bilateral. It is widely multilateral and – whatever the judgment about the morality of the threats the super-powers level at each other – the indirect restraint on the behaviour of third parties that results is highly beneficial. Some of these indirect effects have been achieved by the imposition of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, inapplicable except by the conjoined will of the super-powers. Others are a function of clientage – client states in the super-power orbit being denied both the means to acquire nuclear weapons of their own and the opportunity to wage conventional war. And beyond the orbit of clientage, aspirants to strategic autonomy are deterred by the sheer impossibility of ever being allowed, by one or other or both of the super-powers, to match or even to challenge the military might each possesses.

Large reductions of that military might, to the level where each super-power would merely possess the means, limited by quantity and moral attitude, to strike back at the other's nuclear launchers, would cast the prevailing system of global restraint back into the melting-pot. If the United States and the Soviet Union were to make themselves but the sort of power which a dozen others might aspire to equal, then the world would revert to the condition that existed before 1945. For the super-powers, having committed themselves to measures designed to reduce their nuclear armouries to a size that any of the dozen might possess, would find (a) that the world had become one in which the risk of nuclear war was multilateral instead of bilateral, and (b) that the exercise of power to which each not unnaturally feels it is entitled would have to be achieved by conventional means, rather than being the automatic and indirect effect of the uniquely symmetrical relationship that currently prevails.

This argument may seem to have strayed some distance from the moral ground on which Kenny took his stand. But not so; discounting for a moment the danger of provoking nuclear war that a more common use of conventional force between or by rich states would undoubtedly entail, we are still left with the issue of the morality of conventional war itself. And that, for the Christian and the humanist alike, remains a weighty one. So weighty that, as we know, the first Christians were able to resolve it only by espousing pacifism. Kenny has decided that he is not a pacifist. And quite rightly, too, for a state without an army is, nine times out of ten, a state with many armies and anyone who has visited Lebanon knows that a state of many armies is no state at all. The pacifist lacks any means except moral example – Gandhi's "soul force" – to protect the innocent from the man of evil, who is rarely susceptible to such example, which the pacifist will understand but the innocent victim may not. A "brave and obedient" army – the adjectives are Burke's but the ideas belong to the Gospel – is therefore a deeply civilizing institution and a pearl beyond price in the apparatus of a state.

But there is, of course, a world of difference between the centurion whom Christ knew and esteemed and the conscript hastily inducted and trained by the modern state when it feels impelled to exert by brute force the power which it might otherwise symbolically deploy through a deterrence system based on nuclear weapons. The soldiers of the Roman empire were warriors by choice, and it was by choice or by culture that most warriors were recruited until the dawn of the modern world. Indeed, it is possible to define the modern world in terms of the nature of the military demands it has made on its males. Before 1789, roughly speaking, armies took whom they could get. After 1789, the state deemed that all young men belonged to the army, unless exempted by infirmity or prescript. The result has been that, in most states with a claim to be regarded as civilized, the majority of their young men have for the past 200 years spent the most formative periods of their life learning to kill others, and for extended periods of those two centuries either putting their training into practice or suffering its effects.

The morality of this state of affairs has been governed by its own code. Just as the approach to war is ruled by the ethic known to international lawyers as *ius ad bellum*, its conduct is subject to *ius in bello*. But the alphabetical overlap of these two concepts should not mislead us into thinking that the second can work with the same force as the first. On the contrary: the politician, as the author implicitly concedes, has the time to measure his intentions against the standards of international law; the soldier in the heat of battle does not. Moreover, while *ius ad bellum* makes provision for an elaborate set of contingencies, *ius in bello* is at best a rule of thumb, based on the principle that the innocent should not be killed. Thus prisoners, wounded and medical personnel ought to be spared from death and wounds. But, as anyone who has studied what actually happens on a battlefield quickly grasps, the place is in effect a moral no-man's-land, where *ius* operates patchily and erratically, if at all. When its inhabitants were few in number, and warriors by choice or culture, the moral affront thereby created was limited enough to be overlooked. Once battlefields began to devour the whole manhood of a nation, the affront became criminal in scale. The Germans refer to the destruction of their divisions of half-trained conscripts at Ypres in 1914 as "the Massacre of the Innocents", and it is clear that a similar massacre of Iranian innocents has recently taken place in the war with Iraq.

The capability of modern conventional forces ensures that such massacres would recur in wars between rich states and that they would be more intense in ferocity, extensive in scale and compressed in time. Such events would have a disastrous effect on the psychology of civilized states, inflicting moral outrage on public opinion, not least through the realization of what their young men were compelled to do as well as to suffer on a modern battlefield, and driving governments into dangerously unstable moods. It is precisely to avoid the onset of such moods that the super-powers currently devote as much effort to the avoidance of conventional as of nuclear confrontation. Washington and Moscow, at any rate, accept that power is a seamless garment, and both wear it as well as they may. If, indeed, there is an objection to the strategies the two pursue, it derives less from the nature of the conditional nuclear threats they level against each other than from the laxity of control they exercise over actual events in the real world.

To demand that the super-powers should exert more, not less, power is both to argue for restraints on the freedom of the rest of us that we would not welcome, and to require from them measures of agreement about limitations of sovereignty and divisions of interest perhaps more difficult to achieve than a change of nuclear policy. But, if we think that the supreme morality in the contemporary world is to obviate the circumstances that might bring war about rather than to alter the ethical basis of the deterrent relationship, then acquiescence in the extension of super-power control of the world is a sacrifice that we should be prepared to make. Dr Kenny's proposal, if implemented, would tend to reduce that control rather than extend it. It may not therefore serve the end for which we all fervently hope.

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Crop Inspecting

I had been Crop Inspecting – C2 Pennal
which we'd provisionally bought as seed –
the eleven acres by the railway line,
and in that sheltered corner near the tunnel
someone, quite possibly in love, had been
lying. An Inter-City brayed two notes,
the Buffet car disgorged a Light Ale tin
into the especial, pseudo rural, scene:
holed Nuform, empty Long Life, laid-flat oats.

PETER READING

Fast-food flicks

Paul Smith

GERALD KAUFMAN
My Life in the Silver Screen
159pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571134939

Nostalgia for Merrie England is a good socialist tradition. Here it issues in rampant Kaufmania for what may turn out to be the last great communal popular entertainment in the history of the West – the talking cinema in the thirty years or so when for many people going to the pictures was almost as regular a social habit as eating. The period handily coincides with the rise of the young Gerald Kaufman, so that these cinema-going reminiscences can be intercut with his progress from the ninepennies to the three-and-sixes of life via Oxford, the *Daily Mirror*, and the Department of Industry.

They are a celebration not so much of films as of the picture-going experience. Kaufman is the kind of sniffer after distant madeleines who evokes before everything else the *smell* of the cinema, and misses the agreeable nervous tension of queuing under the eye of a drill-sergeant-turned-commissionaire. The best part of the book is his engaging re-creation of juvenile cinema-going in the Leeds of the 1940s, when hundreds of films could be seen in a given week, and strenuous intelligence-gathering and careful study of the local transport system preceded the expeditions mounted by Kaufman and friends from the information kiosk in City Square. These pages of social history are salutary in reminding those who speculate about the role of the mass-entertainment film in shaping or reflecting popular consciousness that cinema-going was a varied social activity in which the film was not the only or always the most important feature. Audiences did not reverently study the screen "text". They entered in the middle of the film and saw the end before the beginning. They ate, drank, chatted, rolled bottles down the aisles, and, in one Leeds cinema at least, were sporadically disciplined by an individual with a powerful torch and a pole long enough to reach the middle of each row.

In this down-to-earth school, films were for immediate gratification, not for lingering analysis. Despite its early conditioning by the solemn decrees of Richard Winnington, Kaufman's voracious gobbling of films – one wonders how he stayed awake for the journalism and the politics – seems to service the alimentary canal rather than the cerebral cortex. This is fast-food cinema. As the vividly recollected titles speed across the page of his *My Life in the Silver Screen* and the Kaufman thumb jerks peremptorily up or down, consigning W. C. Fields to the pantheon, Deborah Kerr to the guillotine, there is a conscious reluctance to seek much social significance or intellectual depth from the material. Kaufman has written sharp and knowing film criticism, but he dislikes the flights of film theory, dismissing even *Sight and Sound* as "so unreadable that its credentials for seriousness were unchallenged". The supreme criteria of merit are entertainment value and craftsmanship; the great crime is to be "phoney" (Bergman and Bufuel).

The stream of quickfire anecdotes and cocksure judgments does not quite add up to a book, even when diversions to film literature, shooting sets, and disastrous encounters with screen idols are thrown in. Autobiography and film appreciation are not always advantageously blended ("*Henry V* was memorable for me because I saw it on the same day in 1945 that my dog Peter began having the fits which caused him to disappear for weeks at a time and which eventually killed him"). Kaufman is an unstoppable rattle, and much of the time he is simply carrying on up what are here insouciantly referred to as the "Odessa Steppes". His more reflective views on cinema, for instance as a carrier of messages and an agent of orthodoxy and consensus, are banal and undeveloped. He does not seem very interested in either the meaning or the influence of cinema. But he does succeed in conjuring up a little of the magic of going to cinemas in their brief golden age.

Cutting a path

Mark Le Fanu

JOHN BOORMAN
Money into Light: "The Emerald Forest" – A diary
229pp. Faber. Paperback, £4.95.
0471137725

In June 1982 the English film-maker John Boorman was in Los Angeles attempting to raise interest among studio executives in a number of projects he had been working on since his previous film, *Excalibur* (1980). He was not having much luck. Then he bumped into an old friend and collaborator, Rospo Pallenberg, scriptwriter of *Excalibur* and *The Heretic* (1977). Over dinner Pallenberg told him the true story of the child of an American construction worker in Brazil who had been captured by Amazonian Indians and brought up as one of the tribe. During a period of ten years the father had made desperate attempts to find the boy, eventually succeeding. But the child was by then well "integrated" and had forgotten his English. He declined the offer to return to civilization.

On the basis of this tale Boorman and Pallenberg now fashioned a film-script of their own, devising many new incidents and details. The idea was successfully sold to a British film company, Goldcrest, and the film was made over the next two years at a cost of 17 million dollars – not exorbitant by present-day standards. Released by another company, Embassy, in the United States earlier this year, *The Emerald Forest* opened in London earlier this month. John Boorman's diary *Money Into Light* records the making of the film in all its stages, from conception to trial previews among market-researched sample audiences in Los Angeles. The path was never a smooth one, and some of the most interesting pages in this book deal with the titanic quarrels Boorman had with his financial backer. Such conflicts have of course been endemic to large-scale film-making ever since the days of Griffith and Stroheim; but they are etched here with a peculiar force and clarity. Audiences demand authenticity on screen, in a way that they do not (necessarily) of the more openly allegorical stage. That is why Boorman felt he had to go to Brazil and come into direct contact with realities and intransigences that had never been dreamt of in the fashioning of the original script. The book shows the compromises of composition that take place in the course of the making of any serious film. It is, in a way, a tracking of the creative process.

The pre-publication serialization of *Money into Light* in *The Sunday Times* emphasized by its choice of extracts the corporate wrangles with Goldcrest and Embassy. But there is a more serious and thoughtful side to the book that comes across especially in Boorman's description of the field-trip to the Xingu Indians, whom he took as a model for the invented tribe of "Invisible People". (Trained professional and semi-professional actors were used throughout the film; Boorman felt that it would be a mistake to interfere with the customs of a real, existing tribe.) The Xingu welcomed him with simplicity and gravity, initiating him trustfully into their rites. Boorman pays them back here with fine unaffected homage. The loss of access to myth among Western societies is a living and serious issue. *Money into Light* has many convincing thoughts on the matter, incidentally thrown out, but redolent of maturity and thoughtfulness.

Michael Ciment's *Conversation with Losey* (437pp. Methuen. £20. 0 416 40470 7) is a record of conversations between the author and the film director which took place between July 1976 and January 1979. Joseph Losey, who died last year, has contributed a foreword and his wife, Patricia, an afterword on the making of his last film, *Steaming*. The conversations trace the course of Losey's development from childhood and adolescence through to his days in Hollywood, his political involvements and the films of the 1960s such as *Eve*, *Modesty Blaise*, *The Servant* and *Accident*.

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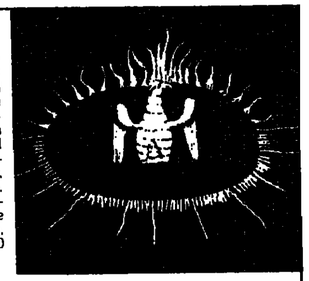

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RED CALLENDER and ELAINE COHEN
Unfinished Dream: The musical world of Red Callender
239pp. Quartet. £13.95.
0 7043 2507 1

Autobiographies of jazz survivors tend to be a mixed blessing. The impassioned pageant of jazz history troops through the pages with its doomed geniuses, historic sessions and brutal injustices, but part of the survivor's secret is to remain incurious. All too often, like Kilroy, the survivor was merely there. The bassist, tuba player, arranger and composer Red Callender has been a musician for over half a century; he made his professional début in 1933 at the age of thirteen with Banjo Bertie and his first recording with Louis Armstrong four years later, since when he has worked with jazz legends like Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, Nat King Cole and Duke Ellington, whose recording of "East St Louis Toodle-oo" gave him his initial compass bearing. He has met Robeson, W.C. Handy and Jack Johnson, and he queued for vaudeville when standard fare featured black performers in fluorescent gloves miming fear in a graveyard. He witnessed the great cultural renaissance on Central Avenue, Los Angeles, and its post-war decline, and he was still around for the Watts riots in the mid-1960s. This is a crowded life at the high table, but the logging far outstrips the analysis.

It is a jazz writer's cliché that bass players, like pipe-smokers, are dependable. They are the work-horses of the band, the indispensable bridge between the fireworks of the drums and the glitter of the piano. Callender has been the living embodiment of dependability throughout his musical career, but it is not a quality which makes for lively reading. "I'm a patient person. I've seen too many blazes for that to be my style", he writes. In old age, a touch of Polonius creeps in. "You don't begin to be a musician or anything else until you approach thirty-five." Charlie Parker, in fact, died at that age. He places a heavy premium on experience – "I'm not rich, but in the sense of experience, I'm Rockefeller" – and cannot comprehend the driven disorder of the geniuses who employed him. The late Charles Mingus, also a bassist and composer (and an erstwhile student of his), makes an ideal contrast. Mingus was many wonderful things, but he was neither patient nor dependable. His wildly imaginative and ambitious autobiography, *Beneath the Underdog*, was entrusted in draft to Callender for safe-keeping. Callender writes of Mingus that "his object in music was to astound everyone, his idea about writing was to intimidate the players with shit so hard it was almost impossible to play". One could write a thesis about the jazz creative spirit on that "almost".

Part of the author's survival kit arrived fortuitously via music lessons from the improbably named Professor Valentine and Miss Ghoul. They taught him harmony at a time when most jazz musicians – and certainly most rhythm-section players – were denied formal musical schooling. "Any low note is a good note, any low note is bass" was the received wisdom of the old-timers, but Callender knew better. It stood him in good stead. He had handy gifts, and when jazz wasn't selling, he transferred to rhythm and blues and arranged for popular artists like Fats Domino and The Platters. "Some of them branded me 'a traitor to jazz'. Well, I was making money and my life wasn't strictly jazz. I was involved in all kinds of music, which is what I'd set out to do from the beginning. The truth is, I never made any money to speak of until I disassociated my name from jazz to a degree."

Based in Los Angeles, he had unlimited opportunities for freelance commercial work. He had established movie credentials with *New Orleans*, and broadened his base with radio and television. His work schedule, printed in extract, conveys the numbing effect of "making a pound of music a day". Somewhere in the back-to-back schedule, he lost a marriage. In the 1970s, there was a revival of interest in the tuba, and agile melodists like Howard Johnson and Bob Stewart built upon Callender's pioneering 1950s recordings. In this decade, Callender has rediscovered a jazz niche with James Newton's Wind Quintet, a chamber group which shares the author's preoccupation with careful writing and sound musicianship.

At a couple of points in the book he delegates the narrative to musician friends. Thus, Buddy Collette handles the struggle to desegregate the musicians' union locals in 1953, and Bill Douglass gives a character portrait of Art Tatum. There is a fine selection of photographs and a necessarily select discography.

"Le Cirque" by Fernand Léger, from a book containing sixty-three lithographs included in the sale of "Modern Illustrated Books" at Sotheby's, New York, on November 14.

Gathered gigs

Charles Fox

GARY GIDDINS
Rhythm-a-ning: Jazz tradition and innovation in the 80s
291pp. New York: Oxford University Press.
$17.95.
0 19 503558 5

During the past seventy or eighty years, jazz has raced through the same pattern of development – folk, baroque, classical, romantic, impressionist, atonal – that preoccupied European music for three or four centuries. Almost every decade appears to have coincided with a major shift in procedure, a rapidity of turnover which makes demands upon any critic hoping to keep abreast of history. Ever since Gary Giddins began reviewing for the *Village Voice* he has displayed the right blend of caution and enthusiasm. He writes stylishly, too, relaxed but never sloppy. Best of all, he possesses the rare virtue of sometimes admitting to puzzlement.

In an earlier collection, *Riding On A Blue Note*, the pieces were arranged under obvious headings ("Singers", "Instrumentalists" and so on). *Rhythm-a-ning* eschews any sort of structure, preferring, almost without exception, to offer reviews in the order that they appeared originally (nearly everything dates from between January 1980 and June 1984). So a useful appraisal of Roy Eldridge's fondness for taking musical risks ("If you like it, it's exciting; if you don't, it's vulgar") comes after a piece about the flautist James Newton; it is followed by coverage of a gig by the Big Sky Mudflaps ("a honky tonk band from Montana") and – not so remote from jazz as might be imagined – an analysis of why Tony Bennett sometimes sings splendidly, sometimes mechanically. The range there may not be typical but the variety certainly is. With the majority of essays running at around 800 to 1,000 words, however, the effect is of a miscellany. Dipping in is more enjoyable than trying to read from beginning to end.

If that puts off potential readers it would be a pity, for Giddins brings a sense of historical perspective to even the most trivial event that he attends. Like any critic perpetually dropping into clubs or sampling new LPs, he feels a need to take bearings and to detect, although he would never use the term, the emerging *Zeitgeist*. He is probably correct in perceiving the 1980s as being bent upon consolidation – neo-classicism, as he calls it. "Not unlike the popularizers of swing in the 1930s and soul in the 1950s, musicians such as [Wynton] Marsalis are needed to restore order, replenish melody, revitalize the beat, loot the tradition for whatever works, and expand the audience."

Avant-gardists, on the other hand, tend, unlike policemen, to start looking older. Some, of course, like Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, have been singeing eyebrows for over a quarter of a century. Giddins devotes one of the book's longer pieces (several reviews have been stitched together) to what Coleman nowadays calls Harmolodic music, a contraction for harmony, movement and melody. Defining it may present problems (Giddins cannot find much divergence between Coleman's latest theories and those he promulgated in the 1960s) but the movement has spawned several popular groups, such as those led by James Blood Ulmer and Ronald Shannon Jackson. When discussing those spin-offs, Giddins might, for the one and only time in the book, be accused of trimming, preferring to describe rather than evaluate.

David Murray, very properly, is treated as the substantial soloist he has become, but Giddins's prophecy – in 1981 – that Arthur Blythe's band would sweep the campuses as Dave Brubeck did in the 1950s looks like remaining unfulfilled. Elsewhere, as with most worthwhile critics, throwaway remarks can imply wider conclusions. Discussing the trumpeter Jon Faddis, who disappeared too early into the recording studios, Giddins suggests that "When America feels good about itself it appreciates Dizzy; when not, it needs Miles" (Faddis, it seems, may be too good-natured, too optimistic for our Milesian epoch). In a piece about Miles Davis himself, Giddins posits the notion of the fluff as a mark of honour (Davis's concert recording of *My Funny Valentine* is famous for the way the trumpeter turns a moment of disaster into an aesthetic tactic). On the other hand, Thelonious Monk was making a deliberate choice when, as Giddins puts it, he transformed "the minor second from mistake to resource".

Giddins comments scathingly upon the contrast between the present-day homage being paid to Monk and the neglect he experienced during his early and most creative period, when "his records were ignored, his compositions pilfered, his instrumental technique patronized, his personal style ridiculed". No culprits are named – which seems a pity. Listeners who have come recently to Monk's music must find the haggling of long ago quite incomprehensible. "Monk isn't merely accessible", writes Giddins, "he's almost gregarious in his desire to entertain; as long as the listener is willing to be entertained on Monk's terms." One of Monk's tunes even provides the title – simultaneously functional and stimulating – for what really is a remarkably clear-eyed book about where jazz appears to be heading.

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Remainders

Eric Korn

I don't see the Post Office, petty-minded wretches, issuing a stamp for her, but they are missing a bet, for it is seventy years since Mrs Maude Dickinson of Brighton, the world's last amateur nuclear physicist, a fine figure of a woman who would have looked well on a parcel, made the epochal confirmation of her discovery of organic radio-activity in soap. Her work is described with loyal enthusiasm by Mr Frank A. Hotblack.

It's never made clear what Hotblack's role is, or how he comes to have such a radiantly apt name, but his book *A New Activity* (Jarrold 1920) merits close and sympathetic scrutiny, which is what I have been giving it.

It started in 1911, when the death of T. Gordon Dickinson, after long illness, left his widow with time on her hands to pursue research into the perfect antiseptic soap, drawing on her knowledge of essential oils and rare oriental unguents, knowledge derived from Time in the East and study of "both the inspired* and the ancient Egyptian writings" ("inspired" here meaning, the * tells us, *Knight's Illustrated Pictorial Family Bible* of 1836). The first fruit was "Dongor", named in backwards honour of the patient Gordon. "Dongor" won a few prizes, but the greater prizes were to come.

On December 24, 1913 – this will look good in the movie, what was to be the last of the crisp clear winters that were to have come before the last of the long hot summers that was to come before the end of civilization as they knew it – horses are steaming and stamping in the frosty air outside the Royal Pavilion, sailors off the Dieppe packet are rollicking and shantying up and down Old Steyne, while inside, behind the damask curtains, Mrs Dickinson hushes the eager thanks of bright-eyed waits and turns to look at framed photograph of husband, eye lingering on newspaper with headline mentioning Becquerel Rays, wars and rumours of wars. She turns to the minute crystalline particles which have precipitated on the paper in the lid of a jar of "Dongor", studies them "under a magnifying glass and later under a microscope" (lots of brass glittering in the firelight) and decides "on account of their unusual character and reddish-brown nature, together with the fact that they glittered and scintillated in the sunlight" (the fool means firelight) that they were in "some 'active' state", "Mrs Dickinson, by a lucky inspiration, exclaimed 'Radium!'" In the movie, I imagine, she will burst into song.

Matters progressed rapidly. The crystals not only glittered, they cleaned wool, charged water to produce a special radioactive drinking water (a glass of it is illustrated, full of merry radioactive bubbles), they encouraged the growth of plants, separated gold from arsenic in Welsh Ore, made markings on glass slides just like the ones Mr Wilson observed in his cloud chamber, and in June, at the Congress of the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies, they attracted the favourable attention of the judges, Professor Gwennel and Mr Keeble. (I can't place Gwennel, but Keeble wrote interestingly about *Convoluta roscoffensis*, a small green flatworm full of seaweed.)

On November 11, 1915, Maude Dickinson Day in many parts of the world, the crystals produced an image on an aluminium-shielded photographic plate, as well as producing scintillations in a spinthariscope *"which was new and had never previously been used"*. The New Age had dawned. Mrs Dickinson, "once humorously nicknamed the High Priestess of Hygiene", went from strength to strength. Mrs Dickinson ("in Originality she probably stands alone and unsurpassed") made yeastless bread (it never went stale and was sent to Our Boys in German prison camps, who enjoyed it thoroughly, even though it was three weeks old). She spawned tadpoles, crystallized fruit, preserved vegetables and cleaned and de-inked newspaper pulp. There was no shortage of radioactivity, since samples of water brought close to the crystals became permanently active themselves. Mrs Dickinson's lubricating oil was praised by the engineers of the London Brighton and South Coast Railway; her feed water kept the boilers clean at Pulsometer Engineering Co; there are testimonials from the Incorporated Institute of Hygiene, the Superintendent of Paper at HM Stationery Office, from Cannon Brewery, from Joy's Biscuits, from the Portland Cement Company and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society.

And there, for now at least, the story ends. Hotblack's book concludes with a list of "miscellaneous applications not described", like the reclamation of rubber, tea and tobacco, the improvement of felt, straw and milk. There are two clippings, one reverential, one snide, from the *Daily Express* of October 1922. Did her secret perish with her? Or does a secret chapter of East Sussex Council continue and extend her work, preparing for the day when they can back up their demands for a solution of the West Sussex border problem (Shoreham they speak of as Hove irridenta, covetous eyes they cast on Littlehampton and Worthing) with a nuclear ultimatum? It is as uncertain as the nature of the Organic Activity itself. But next Monday I have been invited to unveil the Dickinson Particle Accelerator in the University of Sussex High Energy Physics Department, and then perhaps the world will know.

* * *

There's another well-ripened example of the fine old British belief, now all but extinguished, that science is a game all can play, and specialist *expertise* (nasty foreign expression!) an unsporting advantage, like shooting foxes in a barrel with infra-red-homing missiles, in the *Spectator* for – coincidentally – November 11, 1932, which seems to be lying on my desk (an impressive number, with reviews by Peter Fleming and V.S.Pritchett, by Frank Pakenham, later Lord Longford, and Anthony Blunt, later Anthony Blunt). Here "the case against Einstein" is presented by F.W.Bain. Or rather *The Case Against Einstein*, by Dr Arthur Lynch, is reviewed by F.W.Bain. Bain and Lynch were as well rounded a couple as you could wish to find off a bowling-green: Lynch was an Irish Australian from Ballarat with a degree in Civil Engineering from Melbourne and a year's training in "Physics and Psychology" in Berlin. War correspondent in Ashanti, fought with the Boers in No 11 Irish Brigade, "a group of seventy men drawn from every country in Europe except Turkey", says Donal O'Sullivan, who evidently doesn't like him, in *DNB*. Elected MP for Galway, but arrested on coming to take his seat, sentenced to death for high treason, pardoned, qualified in medicine in Paris, re-elected MP, functioned as recruiting officer (for the British Army) in Ireland in 1918, commissioned colonel (in British army). Wrote *Ireland: Vital Hour*, *Our Poets*, *Religio Athletae*, *The Poor Scholar's Quest for Mecca*, *Une Question de Représentation Géométrique*, *Sonnets of the Banner and the Star*, *Psychology, A New System* (2 vols), *Prince Azreel*, *Rosy Fingers* ("output in general characterized by disparagement of established figures") and his most considerable work, *Principles of Psychology*, "destined to be a lump to the feet of men when the British Empire itself is forgotten" (Col A. Lynch), "this judgement has not received general endorsement" (Donal O'Sullivan in *DNB*, which, as I said, doesn't like him).

F. W. Bain, more modestly, was Captain of School at Westminster, author of a biography of Queen Christina of Sweden, of solutions to various economic problems that then troubled the nation, like unemployment and poverty (*The Principle of Wealth Creation*, *The Realisation of the Possible*, *The Corner in Gold*), professor in Poona ("not only a professor but a prophet and philosopher"), football blue (soccer). Fellow of All Souls, author of a series of delicately erotic Indian-style stories (*A Digit of the Moon*, *A Draught of the Blue*, *Bubble of the Foam* etc) which even experts thought – briefly – had actually been translated from the Sanskrit, as originally claimed. He was pretty much against modern politics, modern science, modern thought, which began, for him, certainly no later than Petrus Ramus, though privately he thought Aristotle had gone off the rails a bit towards the end.

Naturally both Lynch and Bain had written critiques of Darwin, fair game for anyone with a colonelcy or a footer cap; I would guess, without having read either of them (and thereby comfortably putting myself into a frangible glass house, yes thank you), that Bain had done best in that encounter, for while Lynch's little *jeu d'esprit* was called *L'Évolution dans ses rapports avec l'Éthique*, Bain's rejoiced in the sonority of *De Vi Physicâ et Imbecillitate Darwiniana*.

But they are much of a mind about Einstein, whose theories could be recognized as logically unsound by any well-stocked, classically trained mind. As for his observations, a few seconds more or less on the occultation of a planet would only excite the derision of a Sanskritist or an MP. Dr Lynch "writes with charming simplicity and pungent wit and generally speaking makes out his case, not indeed that there is any chance of convincing the Relativists". He is especially praised for placing "correctly, the real origin of Einstein's absurdities in the philosophy of Kant". If only he didn't make fun of the medieval Schoolmen: "we can assure him that the great Schoolmen would have made very short work of thinkers such as Einstein, Riemman or Kant". The opening paragraph displays the tone, and the social and intellectual prejudices, wonderfully:

> Some twelve years ago, when the Einstein boom was beginning, we were asked by a friend to a reception where "Einstein" was to be expounded by Sir Oliver Lodge, with Lord Haldane in the chair. We politely declined the kind invitation, exclaiming privately, almost in the words of Disraeli on another occasion: *"the themel the orator! the chairman! what a felicious combination!* And then – *the audience!"*

There's nowhere in the world today that that tone of patrician, amateur disdain can be found – except perhaps in the *Spectator*.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS *of November 16, 1935, published a review of Francis W. Hirst's* Liberty and Tyranny, *from which the following extracts are taken:*

Mr Hirst is a Liberal who stands firm in the great English tradition of Liberalism. Mill is his master, and he has written this book partly because he feels that the doctrine laid down in the treatise "On Liberty" needs re-affirmation . . . There [is] a pitiful chapter, entitled "Torture" . . . in which Mr Hirst shows how all the fruits of the humanitarian reforms accomplished during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been lost over a great part of Europe . . . The chapter should have ended, and five-and-twenty years ago would have ended, with Mr Gladstone's exposure of the atrocities committed in Bourbon Naples. Today, Mr Hirst can parallel those ancient horrors from Russia and Germany. Nor is Britain herself spared, for the chapter ends with some painful accounts of the treatment of conscientious objectors during the War. But no adverse facts can affect the fervour of Mr Hirst's conviction; and he passes on to vindicate afresh, and again in its proper historical context, the right to freedom in thought, speech and writing. Only at the very end does he recur to the peril in which this right now stands . . . in his last sentence he asserts that, if liberty is assailed by force, force should be used in its defence.

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MICHAEL JOSEPH

Letters

'Tito's Flawed Legacy'

Sir, – Nora Beloff's complaints (Letters, November 1) about my review of *Tito's Flawed Legacy* (October 11) occupy seventeen column-inches, a space equal to that of the offending notice itself. Yet she manages to challenge only four of my specific criticisms. In each case her defence is beside the point. It is, for example, immaterial whether or not Rebecca West learnt about Mihailović's resistance plans during her visits to Yugoslavia in 1936 and 1937. I quoted the sentence from page 62 in order to illustrate Miss Beloff's unreliability and illogicality, not to impugn Rebecca West's veracity. Miss Beloff now admits to two of the three errors contained in this short sentence, but seeks to muddy the waters by questioning my awareness of Rebecca West's account of her pre-war activities in Yugoslavia. Had Miss Beloff read the *TLS* correspondence from April and May 1972 more carefully, she would have noticed that I was a participant in the exchanges she is so proud to have unearthed. She might also have avoided the gaffe she makes on page 78 of her book, confusing Rebecca West's encounter with Sir Orme Sargent at the Ivy Restaurant with another meeting with Guy Burgess.

As far as Miss Beloff's other points are concerned, her defence consists almost entirely of obfuscation. She does not now insist that Zagreb sheltered masses of royalist Yugoslav officers in May 1945. She does not repeat her contention that it was the Bosnian diarist and politician Rodoljub Čolaković who met his death on Goli Otok. And she does not deny misquoting F. H. Hinsley on page 92 and misrepresenting him elsewhere. These were the charges I made.

Tito's Flawed Legacy is not "contemptible"; but neither is it the "comprehensive reassessment" of Western relations with Yugoslavia that Miss Beloff imagines. This is not only because it is full of mistakes and misquotations – though these obviously undermine its credibility – but also because it is unhistorical in approach and propagandist in intent. It is a shame that the Yugoslav authorities should have been so stupid as to ban the book. It would have added much to the gaiety of a nation in sore need of light relief these days. Now, unfortunately, it will be taken more seriously than it deserves.

MARK WHEELER.
School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1.

Capital Sin

Sir, – Fritz Spiegl (Letters, November 1) asks why lexicographers seem to be erratic about using capital initials for German nouns. In my review (October 11) of the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* I simply followed the practice of the Grimm brothers themselves. They did not use capital initials for nouns in their prefatory matter or in definitions – hence *form und herkunft*. They printed all their headwords in uniform capitals – eg, BIERMOLKE, GRUNDBILD – and I gave these as *Biermolke*, *Grundbild*, etc, so as not to make them seem too typographically intrusive. Apart from the *Supplement to the OED*, in which I retained Murray's conventions in the *OED* itself in nearly every respect, modern English dictionaries should clearly give initial capitals to German nouns, as Mr Spiegl says. But naturalized loanwords like "ablaut" and "umlaut" do not need capitals in English.

ROBERT BURCHFIELD.
37a St Giles', Oxford.

Sir, – Fritz Spiegl's dogmatic stance and accompanying sense of indignation are unwarranted. He claims he is right in insisting that German nouns should be written with initial capital letters; this is indeed common practice. But he is wrong in taking Robert Burchfield to task for not having complied with this practice in his review of the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, a case in point being the phrase *form und herkunft*. Clearly Mr Spiegl has never consulted the dictionary in question; if he had, he would know that the Grimms were staunch advocates of *kleinschreibung* (except for initials and proper names), and he would know, too, that they not only put forward convincing arguments, both historical and practical, for its use, but also chose to implement it in their own dictionary. They were not alone. One could cite other individuals who have championed the "decapitalization" of German nouns – notably Richard Wagner, Stefan George and Bertolt Brecht. But perhaps the most substantial and convincing case has been made by the subsequent editors of the *Deutsches Wöterbuch*, who have continued to respect the Grimms' wishes.

STEPHEN HINTON.
Grossbeerenstrasse 70, D-1000 Berlin 61.

Sir, – In his letter on the misspelling of German nouns in Britain, Fritz Spiegl does not mention that there is in fact a considerable body of opinion in Germany, Austria and Switzerland which is in favour of abolishing the *Grosschreibung* of German nouns. An argument often used by supporters of a reform is illustrated as follows; I believe it is a sound one:

If the nouns of *Ohne Hast, ohne Rast* are written with lower-case initial letters, the sentence is still unambiguously understandable, and the fact that *hast* and *rast* are the second-person singular of *haben* and the second or third-person singular of *rasen* is neither here nor there. Even without the existence of a new rule that nouns in German are written with small initial letters, the single meaning of *Ohne hast, ohne rast* is evident. Fritz Spiegl's complaint that it is not is logically similar to that of someone who might find the use of "rose" in "The sun rose today at seven o'clock" ambiguous because "rose" is also the name of a flower.

KENNETH T. DUTFIELD.
1 Market Square, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire.

'Bonington, Francia and Wyld'

Sir, – Graham Reynolds's brief review of my book *Bonington, Francia and Wyld* (October 25) raises a number of questions concerning historiography, the use of historical evidence by art historians and the function of catalogues.

Reynolds, who has devoted much of his long and distinguished career to cataloguing the work of one artist, namely John Constable, complains at the paucity of works by Bonington and Wyld in the National Art Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum (just seven watercolours by Bonington and five by Wyld). Is the fact that the V and A is not the Wallace Collection seriously a reason for not cataloguing its works however many or few there are? The object of a catalogue is not merely the recording of the art-work but is also the recording of the collection. How and when objects entered the national collection and in what ways they have been mobilized are a part of British cultural history and worthy of recording for their own sake.

A sequence of unquestioning premisses and assumptions, themselves deriving from a long and unquestioning connoisseurial literature, is the basis of Reynolds's review. For example, only two of the Bonington watercolours "reveal his true qualities", colour was for Bonington "an innate gift", among the Boningtonists Reynolds seeks "true kinship" and "true successors". Could it not be that all this "truth", all this inalienable innateness is less objective fact than historical construct? The whole point about *le Boningtonisme* is not the "truth" of succession but the way in which as a mode of representation and as a way of constructing a paint surface it transforms into something different from Bonington's work under the pressures of a changing market and changing conditions of production. The Wyld watercolours in the V and A show this process particularly well, as my catalogue entries establish.

Just as disturbing is Reynolds's assertion that "it is surely excessive to claim . . . that Francia was the founder of the Sketching Society" rather than Girtin. The suggestion (it is nowhere a claim, see p 20, p 93 and a more extensive discussion in my book *The Bonington Circle: English watercolour and Anglo-French landscape 1790–1855*, 1985) is based upon due consideration of historical evidence and historiography. The products of the Society are largely unsigned but Francia was the secretary and wrote and signed the minutes of the founding meeting. There is no record of Girtin having been disposed to organizing activities in his short life whereas Francia also became secretary of the Associated Artists before returning to France and pursuing a career that is notable for the extent of its public engagement. What Reynolds means by saying that Girtin was the Society's "most established member" is unclear but if he means, as I assume he does, "established" in the sense that art history has been more generous in its attention to Girtin than to Francia then it has to be said that Girtin is "established" in historiography not in history.

MARCIA POINTON.
School of English and American Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex.

Tolstoy's Plays

Sir, – By following the *Radio Times* and describing Radio 3's version of *The Light Shines in Darkness* as the "first-ever production" of Tolstoy's posthumously published play, Peter Kemp has been led astray (Commentary, October 4). It was staged, possibly not for the first time, by the celebrated Austrian director Max Reinhardt on December 13, 1918, at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, with Alexander Moissi and Lucie Höflich. The production ran intermittently until October 31, 1922, and in all seventy-nine performances were given.

Tolstoy held a life-long attraction for Reinhardt, who presented *The Fruits of Enlightenment* early in his career (1903) and *Redemption* fittingly towards the end (1939). *The Power of Darkness* (1918) and *The Case of It All* (1920) were well attended, but his outstanding success was *The Live Corpse*. The première was on February 7, 1913, at the Deutsches Theater, it was revived in 1917, and retained in the repertory until 1923/24. Four seasons later a new production was taken to the United States; this was shown in Berlin for the centenary of the author's birth, then in Vienna, and finally in London at the Globe Theatre (1930). Moissi, who had created the role of Fedja, could still be seen in it.

L. M. NEWMAN.
University of Lancaster Library, Lancaster.

Marina Tsvetaeva

Sir, – In my review of Marina Tsvetaeva's collected poems (October 11), I made mention of the excellent monograph by Simon Karlinsky published in 1966, and I stated that Cambridge University Press is to reissue it shortly in a revised form. A more accurate account of the matter would have stressed that this will be virtually a new book, with fresh insights and drawing upon a wealth of material made available in the last fifteen years. I am sorry to have give the impression that it was anything less.

HENRY GIFFORD.
10 Hyland Grove, Bristol.

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COMMENTARY

The flight of the rocket

Peter Kemp

The Other Side of Paradise
Tender is the Night
BBC 2

The most interesting fact to emerge from *The Other Side of Paradise – Bookmark*'s profile of Scott Fitzgerald – was that the first word he wrote was "Up". Aiming high was his primary urge. But, along with his impulsion to climb – into the world of the rich, the headlines, a high-income bracket, literary celebrity – went a contrary leaning towards collapse. Played out against the 1920s boom and the 1930s depression, Fitzgerald's life follows a legend-like trajectory from euphoria to decline; so do the plots of his novels. One after another, his protagonists slump from promise to waste, charm to seediness, energy to lethargy, alertness to befuddlement. It's apt that a projected title for his second book, *The Beautiful and Damned*, should have been *The Flight of the Rocket*. Icarus-like, Fitzgerald's heroes regularly plummet from some glittering height. Monroe Stahr, in his final, uncompleted work, *The Last Tycoon*, was to have undergone the most literal and lethal instance of this: dying in a plane crash.

As if in unfortunate homage to this pattern in Fitzgerald, *The Other Side of Paradise* started promisingly, then nose-dived into the banal. Ian Hamilton's opening commentary offered perceptive pointers into Fitzgerald's work, but none of these was followed up: occasional glances towards the novels scarcely penetrated beyond close-ups of their dust-jackets; *The Beautiful and Damned* didn't even get direct mention. Instead, the programme opted for a trudge over familiar ground. The main milestones in Fitzgerald's life, from Princeton to Hollywood, were plodded past. Morley Callaghan and Malcolm Cowley – "two survivors of the lost generation", as the *Radio Times* billed them – re-aired musty reminiscences, as did other veteran Fitzgerald familiars. Jerky bits of home movie and clips from period newsreel alike failed to get much animation into things. Far and away the most compulsive footage in the programme, in fact, came from BBC 2's recent dramatization of *Tender Is the Night*. Vibrant with atmosphere and intelligence, extracts from this provided a reminder of its distinction and flair.

Following the revised version of the novel, where events are narrated chronologically, Dennis Potter's adaptation of *Tender is the Night* streamlines the story. The Divers' children – never closely integrated into the book: Nicole thinks of them as "orphans" – are removed; so is Mary North's reappearance as Mary Minghetti. This means that some lively scenes are lost: Mary's break-up with the Divers, her *maelot* antics with Caroline Sibley-Biers, the eerie garish episode where Nicole runs amok in a fairground. And there are a couple of moments where Potter's pruning shears clip damagingly into the dialogue. The announcement of Abe North's death after being beaten up in a speakeasy gets cut from "He just managed to crawl home to the Racquet Club to die" to "He just managed to crawl home to die" – thus losing the full bleakness of his end. Nicole's reflection, "better a sane crook than a mad puritan", is unaccountably abbreviated to the unlikely, too crude-sounding "better a crook than a puritan".

Such cavils aside, though, this is an adroit and imaginative adaptation whose discreet additions, tidyings-up and splicings-together never stop it catching the spirit of Fitzgerald's book. Robert Knight's direction of it stylishly combines lushness and astringency. Visually, the film is handsome, moving out from the damp greens and greys of Switzerland to the hot colours of the Riviera, then on to the chic tints and creamy luxury of Paris in 1925. Opulent with period detail – women slithering from square-topped cabs in a shimmer of shiny headbands, silk stockings and flapper skirts, men sleek from their trilbies to their two-tone shoes – the production reflects Fitzgerald's fascination with glamour without ever softening into mere goggling at gorgeousness.

As appealing as the look of the film is its soundtrack. Potter's script, as might be expected, makes widespread use of period music – something Fitzgerald, who once wished he'd been a creator of musicals like Cole Porter or Rodgers and Hart – would surely have relished. Twenties melodies – some mentioned in the book, some not – underscore what's happening. Saxophones sob out "Poor Butterfly" and other tunes about transience – "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles", "Glow, Little Glow-Worm". When Dick and Rosemary finally make love – too late and in a mood of feverish pleasure-grabbing rather than passion – "Let's Misbehave" cynically hums in the background. There's an especially good early scene in which a wind-up gramophone emits the scratchy jauntiness of ragtime as Nicole – shakily lively – starts to manoeuvre Dick into becoming her partner.

Mary Steenburgen's dark Nicole isn't physically accurate: she should have "very blonde hair", highlighting her resemblance to Zelda who was, Dorothy Parker noted, "very blonde". She also looks slightly too old – as does Sean Young's Rosemary Hoyt, another blonde darkened in this film. Where Sean Young's Rosemary misrepresents the character, though – giving her a moody, Pre-Raphaelite-seeming sophistication that is at odds with the immaturity the book insists on – Mary Steenburgen is perfectly cast as regards Nicole's personality. Adept at chameleon-quick flickerings from one emotion to another, she conveys with uncanny immediacy the darting fluctuations of response Nicole is at first subject to, then gives a convincing picture of the ominous recovery. Beginning with the portrayal of a trepidant, suddenly radiant, flutteringly predatory creature, she shows the character hardening into tough-knit egotism, clinching her outbursts of verbal aggression with a mean little nod of assertiveness, narrowing her remarkable eyes into glinting slits of animosity.

Peter Strauss also makes telling use of his eyes – even managing to convey the sudden flash of blue from his gaze that Fitzgerald attributes to Diver. Like Mary Steenburgen, too, he gives a riveting performance of a split personality. Torn between his roles as doctor and husband, between an initial desire to explore human depths through psychiatry and his eventual restriction to the surface world of charm, he has to encompass a wide span. That Diver never really convinces as a psychiatrist – despite the production's investment in white coats and a tome-lined study adorned with Freud's photograph – is due not to Strauss but to Fitzgerald, who never gives sufficient substance to these sections of the story. Where Strauss shines is in his transmission of Dick's charm, and his depiction of the man's final leached-out collapse. The "low painful fire of intelligence" you never quite believe in when you hear of its being devoted to pioneering psychological treatises flares out in acute sarcasms as he tries to kick away the vacuous socialites he has sustained for so long.

Kate Harper's Baby Warren – a Bette-Davis-like performance of rich bitchery – is outstanding as an instance of that money-varnished repulsiveness Dick finally turns against. And, elsewhere too, the production is strong in its subsidiary roles: John Heard's Abe North, sodden with alcohol and bitterness at his own futility; Jurgen Brugger's Franz Gregorovius, a splendid rendering of pursed, pussy-footing resentfulness. As a terminally ill patient – fastidious speech emerging from behind a mask of bleeding tetters of eczema – Joanna David gives a moving, brief performance. Timothy West, as the father of a young alcoholic Australian in the book, here from the Midlands – gusts through one scene with hilarious sour bombast. Lastly, applause is due to the trio of inmates who, at the psychiatric clinic's *matinées musicales*, flailingly and unfallingly saw out Suppé's *Light Cavalry Overture* with discomposing zest.

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128 pages 16pp b/w illus. 0 563 20389 7 An Ariel Paperback £3.95
BBC PUBLICATIONS

Sales of books and MSS

H. R. Woudhuysen

Sotheby's general sale of books and manuscripts began on November 12. The first two sessions were devoted to atlases and maps, travel and topography, and books on natural history, science and medicine. The third session was devoted to art reference books including some owned by the poet and art historian Laurence Binyon. Further sessions follow on November 19 and these provide the most interesting material. Who would not like to own Carlyle's set of *Tristram Shandy* (1794), or Wordsworth's copy of Milton's Latin letters (1676)? Lord Herbert of Cherbury's copy of Sir Thomas More's Latin works (1566) may appeal to a more arcane taste but it would be hard to deny the attractiveness of Rupert Brooke's text of Martial's epigrams (1816) acquired at Bournemouth in 1907.

Besides these attractive association copies – none of which is expected to make above £250 – there are some good autograph letters and other more unusual items for sale. Six 78 rpm records of T. S. Eliot reading from the *Four Quartets* ("some scratches, sold not subject to return") are estimated to fetch £100–£120, while just one record of Joyce reading from the end of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" is expected to go for £150–£200. An invitation from Aubrey Beardsley to lunch, with some other odds and ends, is estimated at £200–£250, while a rare and almost unintelligible fragment of twenty-eight words from Edgar Allen Poe ("God bless you, my dear 'Muddy'. Your own Eddy") may reach £200–£300. In contrast to this, a fine letter from the prolific Swinburne to the equally prolific John Addington Symonds in which he talks about Elizabethan literature – "Some of Spenser's own laments are such lamentable stuff that he may not have been incapable of this twaddle also . . ." – is only estimated at £100–£150.

Some musical items including an unpublished letter from Berlioz, a good collection of scores inscribed by Elgar, and Sir Henry Wood's conducting copy of Elgar's First Symphony (estimate £300–£500) are also in the sale. A letter from Joachim possibly to G. H. Lewes about George Eliot is slightly more unexpected. The sale as a whole, consisting of over 1,300 lots, contains an interesting assortment of items. Some of these may well be worth looking at in more detail than the necessary brief catalogue entries can provide.

Sotheby's other sale, beginning on November 7, was altogether on a far grander scale. The expensively produced and often very pretty catalogue described just under 700 lots. Most of these were atlases or illustrated books of travel or books relating to science and natural history. There were also a fair number of single-sheet maps and coloured prints. The most beautiful of all collections of maps, Blaeu's *Atlas* of 1662, with slightly under 600 contemporary hand-coloured plates went for £60,000: the colouring in this copy seemed to be particularly fine. Less spectacular single-sheet maps of the British Isles, issued at Rome in 1556 and 1589, and at Amsterdam in 1606 or later, are not as accurate or dazzling as Blaeu, but in their own rather bizarre way quite attractive and very uncommon. They fetched £1,200, £500 and £250 respectively. An even more austere set of ninety-five Admiralty charts of the Australian coast, issued between 1846 and 1861, went for £45,000: a large collection such as this is apparently extremely rare.

The sale included some outstanding examples of colour plate books, including the *Description de l'Égypte* (1817–30), the research for which was begun during Napoleon's invasion of the country, David Roberts's work on the Holy Land (1842–9), which reached £70,000; Péron, Freycinet and Baudin on the South Seas (1807–16) and some fine sets of Gould's various books on birds – the volume with 681 colour plates of Australian birds, originally published at £115, broke its estimate of £50,000–£70,000 and fetched £99,000. It is hard to do justice to this very rich collection of illustrated books which extended from William Swainson's *Zoological Illustrations* (1820–33), the first English bird book with hand-coloured lithograph plates, to Gregory M. Mathews's *The Birds of Australia* (1928–36), which was the last ornithological work to be illustrated with hand-coloured lithographs.

Among the rarer printed books were corrected printer's proofs for Thomas W. Smith's account of his travels in the South Pacific, which was issued at Boston in 1844 and made £750. The role of the Jesuits in North America was witnessed by a series of five *relations* of "ce qui s'est passé en la nouvelle France" – that is Canada – between 1633 and 1642. These annual reports are important sources of information about Indian tribes and fetched £12,000. A series of letters relating to Spanish involvement against Britain during the American War of Independence went for the same amount, while the most attractive manuscript in the sale, a seventeenth-century treatise illuminated in Germany describing the manufacture of gunpowder, fetched £6,000.

Christie's sale of a similar collection of books (see *TLS* October 25, 1985) was not outstandingly successful, with quite a few of the best lots bought in. The copy of the Redouté roses with two sets of plates made £55,000 and the fine set of Roberts's *Holy Land* £60,000. George Brookshaw's *Pomona Britannica* (1822) broke its estimate of £30,000–£40,000, fetching £45,000, and Mark Catesby's early work on the natural history of Carolina, Florida and the Bahamas (1731–43) with 199 hand-coloured etched plates made £26,000 against an estimate of £10,000–£15,000. John Gould's *The Mammals of Australia* (1845–63) reached £36,000 (estimate £20,000–£25,000). At the lower end of the price range Anne B. Wright's apparently unrecorded *Sketches Round Bath* made £520 against an estimate of £250–£350.

COMMENTARY

The cult of the country house

Linda Colley

The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting
National Gallery of Art, Washington, until March 16
GERVASE JACKSON-STOPS (Editor)
The Treasure Houses of Britain
680pp. Yale University Press. £50 (paperback, £19.95).
0300035047

This spectacular new exhibition occupies 35,000 square feet in the East Building of Washington's National Gallery: it is the largest and most complex art show ever staged here; it has cost the Ford Motor Company well over a million dollars: it has absorbed 590 art objects from over 200 country houses in the United Kingdom and inspired a three-part television series and a visit from the Prince and Princess of Wales; its catalogue is almost nine pounds in weight and 700 pages long and is a model of absorbed and illuminating scholarship. It is, in short, a triumph of American cultural investment and perhaps more historically accurate than its Anglo-American organizers supposed. Like the landed classes it commemorates, this exhibition is gorgeous in its accumulated wealth, full of the pride and dignity of hereditary power, and élitist and ultimately mischievous in its rationale.

Visually and interpretatively, the exhibition's designers – Gaillard Ravenel, Mark Leithauser and Gervase Jackson-Stops – have done a superb job. Beginning with the Tudor Succession in 1485, five sections trace the British country house through to its partial decline and subsidized renaissance in the twentieth century. Within this chronological framework, seventeen rooms focus on particular components of the country-house aesthetic. There is a Jacobean Long Gallery, complete with lattice windows and a ceiling modelled on that shown in one of the exhibits, Daniel Mytens's portrait of the Countess of Arundel. A neat Dutch cabinet, bristling with masterpieces like the Rembrandt from Drumlanrig Castle, is based – right down to the picture above the fireplace, on Zoffany's portrait of Sir Lawrence Dundas. The Waterloo Gallery, commemorating the time when British aristocrats ransacked Europe for mastery in war and old masters on the cheap, contains the scarlet walls and boastful pillars portrayed in Charles Leslie's study of the mighty Grosvenor clan in 1831.

In such a well-ordered Aladdin's Cave it seems inappropriate to focus on individual treasures. But some are too splendid to resist. The Rainbow Portrait of Elizabeth I from Hatfield House is, as it was intended to be, magical. From Kingston Lacy comes Rubens's portrait of Marchesa Caterina Grimaldi, newly cleaned and triumphing in her glamour and conspicuous consumption. And there is much more here than pictures. There is jewellery (including an exquisite tiara modelled on wild roses and jasmine from Woburn Abbey); there is magnificent silver (the toilet service made for the Countess of Kildare in the early 1700s is particularly delectable); and, nestling among an array of Chelsea, Bow and Sèvres, a pair of Chinese tureens designed like brilliantly coloured swimming geese, entirely suited to the exotic temperament of their first Western owner, William Beckford.

Viewed in this way, as a succession of chronologically and thematically arranged objects, this exhibition is almost a museum in itself, and a first-rate one at that. But what do these art objects tell us about the individuals and the social class who amassed them? One answer to this question is set out in the exhibition catalogue. J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery, describes British country houses as "some of the oldest and longest-running museums in the world", as "vessels of civilization" and "temples of the arts". The same interpretation is proffered by Gervase Jackson-Stops and James Pipkin in *The English Country House: A Grand Tour* (240pp. New York Graphic Society/Little, Brown and Company. $29.95. 0 8212 1598 1). We are invited to see the owners of these mansions as a myriad of Medicis, assembling beautiful objects over time not only for their own benefit but also to enrich the national heritage.

Yet some of the better essays in the catalogue, and the detailed descriptions it contains, suggest that this rendition of patrician patronage in Britain is profoundly flawed. As Mark Girouard argues, country houses in the past were primarily to do with landed incomes, social prestige and political power. As late as 1873 four-fifths of the land in Britain was owned by 7,000 people. The majority of these were country house owners, and before 1906 the majority of Cabinet members were country house owners also. For men such as these – busy in central and local government, engaged in industrial and financial ventures, and absorbed in expanding their estates or exploiting the empire – patronage of the decorative arts was, understandably, low on the list of priorities. Paradoxically, the fact that British aristocrats were so wealthy and so powerful for so long often made them worse and not better art partrons.

And the exhibition reflects this. The sheer number of houses that had to be drawn on to generate a show of this size is in itself indicative, as is the paucity of good Renaissance art. Most of the best objects on show were assembled between 1700 and 1840. And even in this period, as Francis Haskell argues, serious collecting by country house owners (as distinct from the growing number of bourgeois art patrons in eighteenth-century England) only really began with the French Revolution. It was this which dispersed the great Bourbon collections and made them viable investments for British millionaires like the Duke of Bridgwater and Lord Gower. The later Georgian era also saw the emergence of world-standard British artists like Turner, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Constable and this fact, too, contributed to the unusually high standard of British country house collections at this time. For once, the insular tastes of most owners and their obsession with family portraits (which make up over 40 per cent of the pictures on show here) paid off. Later, however, this was not the case. The exhibition's reliance after 1850 on paintings by Alma-Tadema, Lord Leighton and some dreadful staghorn furniture from Osborne House, is as telling in this respect as the complete absence of works by the French Impressionists.

Equally telling is the fact that many of the active art patrons featured in this exhibition were on the periphery of the British landed élite. The major Tudor patron John, Lord Lumley, was a Catholic disgraced in the Ridolfi Plot; the Earl of Arundel, Britain's first great art collector, was another Catholic living under the shadow of family treason; Charles Towneley, a foremost collector of antique marbles in the eighteenth century was also Catholic; while William Beckford – whose art treasures now enrich the Buccleuch family – was a social outcast because of his homosexuality. In short, these men were prominent collectors not because they were typical of their social class, but rather because they were not.

This does not mean that Britain's past aristocrats were lacking in cultural achievement. But the primary interest of most of them lay in the great houses they built and the gardens they laid out around them. And for good reasons. As this was a power élite, its art investment was intended to serve primarily a public function: to impress social peers and overwhelm social subordinates. Consequently, the men who benefited most from country house patronage in this country were Robert Adam, Capability Brown, Nicholas Hawksmoor, Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir John Vanbrugh and Sir Jeffry Wyatville, rather than the decorative artists who catered for private delight and interior decoration.

Barbara, Lady Sidney, with six children, by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, from the exhibition reviewed here. The group, which was painted in 1596, is one of few works which can linked to the artist by contemporary documentation. It has remained at Penshurst Place since it was painted.

So why do some of the experts involved in *The Treasure Houses of Britain* suggest otherwise? Largely because this superlative exhibition has been used as cultural propaganda by the private country house owners' lobby, the Historic Houses Association, and elements within the National Trust. Both groups favour the "total" country house – that is, the preservation intact not only of the houses (and of course their owners) but also of the art treasures they contain. This applies even if the art treasures have been ceded to the nation in lieu of tax. "It is of the greatest importance that this principle should be extended", argue Marcus Binney and Gervase Jackson-Stops, "and in particular that it should be accepted by the National Gallery in London." Why?

Some country-house art treasures owned by the state probably should be allowed to remain *in situ* – most obviously family portraits. But as every regular visitor to country houses knows, many of their art treasures are badly lit, lost among a welter of stuffed birds and stamp collections, roped off in awkward corners and often sadly in need of professional cleaning. And of course country houses are often shut for most of the year, and visiting them usually requires a car and always costs money. In Washington one can see the cream of British country-house collections immaculately and intelligently arranged, well lit, well cleaned, open daily, close to public transport and completely free of charge. Next March the country house owners, private and corporate, will come to reclaim their own and, in some cases, the public's treasures. Good for them: but are we quite sure it is also good for us?

More generally, are we sure that the present cult of the country house in Britain – to which this exhibition gives international recognition – is always merited and healthy? The catalogue assures us that country house owners, past and present, have been characterized by "culture and humanity, scholarship and lack of pomposity" and that the houses of these paragons should remain an imperishable part of the national heritage. Perhaps ideally they should. But since most houses were built by men and women obsessed with private interest rather than patriotic intent; since most people in the British nation had absolutely nothing to do with them (except pay them rent and their respect); since art treasures are sparse in many houses and would often be better displayed in public galleries; and since the National Trust already owns over 150 houses in England, Scotland and Wales, just how many more should the nation be expected to subsidize?

For Gervase Jackson-Stops the answer is clear: country house preservation stems from a "fierce and irrational loyalty to the past . . . a loyalty that can only bode well for the future". Yet loyalty to the past is rarely the best strategy for a nation in accelerating economic decline. Gazing at treasure houses too long can lead one to be buried with them.

The second National Art-Collections Fund Film and Lecture Season at the Millbank Tower is sponsored by Pearson plc. The progamme for November and December includes a lecture by Colin Amery on Edwin Lutyens's work in New Dehli and a film of the building of New Delhi by Edwin Luytens and Herbert Baker (November 18); a personal memoir of Magritte by George Melly and a film made during the 1969 Tate Magritte retrospective (November 25); two films on the work of Georges Seurat and Monet in London (December 2) and an illustrated lecture by Hugo Vickers on the life and work of Cecil Beaton. Tickets which are £2.75 per evening can be obtained from Robert McPherson, National Art-Collections Fund, 20 John Islip Street, London SW1P 4LL.

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Legacy to the lamentable

Andrew Hislop

JOHN MORTIMER
Paradise Postponed
374pp. Viking. £9.95.
0 670 80094 5

John Mortimer would, perhaps, not be the best of Prime Ministers but he would make a very nice God. A novel is a fair test of an author's suitability for ordering human affairs and *Paradise Postponed*, Mortimer's first for many years, is a delightful moral tale of post-war English society – told with much humour, cynical but affectionate, detached but with the *insight of a game participant* in the farce.

Mortimer plays God like the rare soul he is: an English liberal. He refuses in *Paradise Postponed* to exploit the omnipotence of the novelist. There is no intrusive narrator, certainly no stream of consciousness. Description is economical. The abundant dialogue is witty and poignant and many scenes end with a punch-line. The structure of the plot with its flash-backs is of central importance. In short, this is the work of a very skilled comic dramatist. The inevitable adaptation for television will be a doddle and, no doubt, also a delight.

Mortimer has always had much fun with the comic embarrassment of even credulous Englishmen when confronted with a prospect of the divine. In his play *Fear of Heaven*, two Englishmen think they have already reached the other side when they wake up in an Italian hospital on the ceiling of which is a Renaissance painting of Paradise and God's big toe. In another play, *Prince of Darkness*, two trendily doubting clerics are led to believe that a miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes has taken place in a rectory fridge.

Paradise Postponed opens with the dying Rector of Rapstone Fanner embarrassed by a dream of "God on a cloud, a sort of electric light bulb behind his head. He was actually busying himself . . . judging people!" Simeon Simcox duly departs to meet his Maker, and his maker then begins his exploration of paradise postponed – postponed not for the lamented dead but for the lamentable living. For Simeon was a radical cleric of the old-*New Statesman* school. He lived off a private income (from the family brewery), marched to Aldermaston, sent his sons to public school and always contemplated with bemused puzzlement the failure of the Attlee government to mark the coming of a New Jerusalem.

Simeon is not lost to us, for he is allowed lengthy resurrections in flash-backs; but the narrative and symbolic crux of the novel is his legacy. He bequeaths his beer money not to his wife, the dreamy but verbally tart Dorothy, or to his sons – Henry, radical novelist turned New Right, old fogey film-writer, or Fred, part-time jazz drummer and unlucky lover turned village doctor – but to Leslie Titmuss, born into service but risen to become a wealthy Conservative Cabinet minister.

As in Mortimer's play *Edwin* – and indeed as in *Howards End* – sexual dalliance is linked symbolically to the future of society, but the solution of the relationship between Simeon and Leslie turns out to be more complex than one at first suspects. Leslie is not a figure to be pitied like Leonard Bast. His progress is due to a willingness not merely to get on his bike but to puncture the tyres of others. He is cynical, greedy, callous – particularly in his treatment of his wife Charlie, the daughter, officially at least, of a landed Tory MP. He is also a prig. You almost sympathize with the ghastly Hooray Henrys who throw him and his hired dinner jacket into the river after a Young Conservative dinner.

If Leslie is the future, no wonder Mortimer dwells so long on the past in the novel. The contrasting lives of Simeon's sons are explored in great detail: a poacher, Tom Nowt, and a wonderfully misanthropic doctor, Salter, influence Fred, while Henry engages with the Brixton-born Hollywood mogul, Ben Bugloss, and Fred's girlfriend Agnes, the daughter of the doctor, whom he marries. As the plot weaves its intricate way down memory lanes and back, Mortimer does toss in the odd golden oldie from the real world – the Profumo affair, the singing nun, bricks in the cistern and tooth-brushing in the dark from the three-day week – but it soon becomes clear that in *Paradise Postponed* he is chronicling not the sudden rise of a real class of parvenus and the death of an actual way of life – parvenus, like the middle classes, have always risen – so much as a change in socially acceptable myths. The novel's setting – English village life – is itself a myth, one which easily accommodates Simeon's radicalism, for this never threatens the status quo of worlds either mythical or actual.

Leslie is less easy to accommodate. His "crime" is not his ambition – an English liberal cannot condemn a chap for just not wanting to be a servant. It is not, even, that he has behaved badly – the liberal loves to forgive (Henry, who ditches Agnes, also behaves badly, without meriting very much disapproval). But he makes a virtue of his unscrupulous methods. He boasts about them, while the old villagers' mythology allowed them to be hypocritically silent about their secret sins. He represents the new brutalism of the *mythology* of Thatcher's England, and it is not to Mortimer's liking.

Whether in reality the Titmusses are more brutal is another question; but the mythological shift is undeniable, even, it seems, in the attitude to God. Simeon is embarrassed by the prospect of the divine but Leslie prays for his selection as the Conservative candidate for Hartscombe and South Worsfield. Mortimer, soft touch that he is, answers his prayers. His thunderbolts are only dusted down to deliver Leslie a shock over the beer money.

Getting disidentified

Linda Taylor

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299pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95.
0 07011 2864 X

More a fictional documentary than a novel, *Heavenly Deception* traces the indoctrination of Carmen Stone by the Moonies. Carmen is looking for her sister, Lucy, who has sent one bland postcard home during months of unexplained absence. Believing that Lucy may be with the Moonies, Carmen accepts an invitation from one of them to join a course of instruction.

This consists of lectures on Divine Principle, physical jerks and corporate singing. "Principle", the Moonie doctrine, connects the Old and New Testaments "logically" to prove that the job of a redemptive Messiah is to restore the old corrupted bloodline from God to humanity, the one defiled by Satan's (alias the serpent's) infiltration of Eve's mind/body. The true Messiah is supposed to marry and breed pure (ie inhuman) children. Christ failed by getting himself crucified; the Reverend Sun Meung Moon is, therefore (after some mathematical calculations about the significance of his date of birth), the new, true, pure saviour. He will, with Mrs Moon, their offspring and the Family of converts (whose marriages are arranged by Moon if they are sufficiently spiritual), restore the bloodline, sanctify humanity and thus save the world.

The theory behind Principle is simple and stupid; Carmen, a rationalist, finds it easy to resist. What is captivating is the devious method of initiation: between their appointed "spiritual parents" and the demands of the group, "visitors" are never left alone. Bombardment by others (solitariness leaves one open to Satan so they sleep twenty to a room, share communal bathrooms, and so on), the book suggests, occasions a sequence of effects on an individual: secretive self-protection, alliances with other like-minded persons, wild truancy, contrition, token assimilation into the group, fear of being excluded from the group, anxiety about the outside world, total commitment. Corporate singing, "Family Evenings", group exercise and the practice of humility institutionalize by stripping identity. The method disorients by alienating the individual from any previous life. (At one point Carmen discovers that her clothes have been removed and she has only a shapeless Moonie shift to wear.) *Life with the Moonies is akin to the* various kinds of inmate world that Erving Goffman describes in *Asylums*:

> the individual has to engage in activity whose symbolic implications are incompatible with his conception of self . . . [he] is required to undertake a daily round of life that he considers alien to him – to take on a disidentifying role.

It takes Carmen two weeks to be fully "disidentified"; to experience an apocalyptic vision ("this most intense moment of clarity and inner revelation"); to acquire the "secret, unfamiliar" eyes of the true Moonie member. The internal resources of a clever twenty-year-old are not enough to combat the cumulative effects of unremitting persuasive techniques, poor food, hard work and sleeplessness.

As narrative material, alien forces and non-surgical lobotomies are compelling stuff. One is avid to find out what happens (o Carmen – will she make a stand against that heavenly deceiver Sun Meung Moon? Sadly, no, but it is less the fact that the Moonies are triumphant that makes the book disappointing than the tediousness of the writing. With an unformed, wavering central character, a supporting cast of nice, banal Moonies, and action consisting of repeats (once you've heard about one lecture / PE session / corporate sing-song / Family Evening, you've heard about them all), it is perhaps hard to instil much life into the prose. Maggie Brooks is so busy recreating the real thing that there is not a lot of time left for distance, irony, metaphor, or any of the subtleties that make one want to linger over novels. In a discussion session about the origin of the world, for instance, in which Carmen supports the big bang theory, the force of the Moonies' fixated sentimentality is somehow lost in the clichéd dullness of the surrounding text:

> Her stomach growled. She looked plaintively at Gary, hoping someone would change the subject. He studiously avoided her eye and his foot was tapping nervously as though she was letting him down in some way.
>
> Marianne continued to transfix her with a glare of disapproval.
>
> "How do you think Heavenly Father feels if you learn in school that his flowers, his trees, his beautiful creation have all just happened from this explosion?"

While *Heavenly Deception* is not fictionally very rewarding, then, it does present a convincing picture of how hard it is to resist the Moonie brand of brainwashing. Clearly, the Unification Church takes its place among other kinds of total institution, mass hysteria and ideological propaganda. It is a shame that Maggie Brooks has relied on the obvious, chilling effects of her material without exploring more imaginatively the war between singularity and group pressures.

JAMES MELVILLE
The Death Ceremony
181pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
0 43627 696 8

A formal tea ceremony in Kyoto ends unexpectedly when the Seventeenth Hereditary Grand Master of the Southern School gets a rifle bullet in the brain. Superintendent Otani, aided by his usual sidekicks, scruffy Noguchi and suave Kimura, investigates. As well-written and as pleasingly informative about Japanese life as any of James Melville's earlier Otani books, but perhaps a little thinner in content.

TOM CLANCY
The Hunt for Red October
479pp. Collins. £9.95.
0 00 222927 7

Captain First Rank Marko Ramius plans to defect to the United States and take with him his latest command: the huge Typhoon-class missile submarine Red October, pride of the Soviet navy. The Russian and American fleets are hastily mobilized: one to stop, the other to assist him. One-dimensional characters, crass motivation, gung-ho chauvinism and enough technical detail to float HMS Invincible don't make the book anything less than absorbingly entertaining.

T. J. Binyon

Myth-chipping

Sally Dawson

THEA ASTLEY
An Item from the Late News
200pp. University of Queensland Press. £9.95.
0 702 17026
Beachmasters
185pp. Penguin. Paperback, £2.95.
0 14 007912 2

From *Girl with a Monkey* (1958) onwards, the celebrated Australian writer Thea Astley has directed her satirical, sometimes moralistic gaze at the pettiness and violence of small-town philistinism. *An Item from the Late News* tells the story of Wafer, a bomb-age baby, haunted in adult life by the vision of his father being blown apart before his eyes (and of all those other victims of bombs, past or to come), who seeks peace and shelter in the country that is itself the "perfect bomb shelter" – Australia. But the offensively male inhabitants of Allbut, the town he settles on for his retreat, do not welcome tolerance (Wafer befriends all manner of outcasts) and equivocal delicacy in their hard-hitting, beer-swilling community.

We have seen this kind of community before in Astley's work: like Patrick White's Sarsaparilla, though without its sustaining vitality, it is a place of small minds, narrow prejudices and decayed prosperity. Her tone ranging from irony to righteous indignation, Astley systematically strips off the layers of respectability to reveal sinister undercurrents – the animality that underlies tough masculinity, the terrible *weakness that disguises itself as decency* and solidarity. Debunking the old mateship myth, she lays bare a society where "women are never quite adults" and where most of the men are never quite human.

The story is told by Gabby: "I am the omniscient narrator. I am a weaver of knowns and almost knowns. I translate. I paraphrase." It is Gabby's artistic consciousness which allows her access to unseen events and unconfessed thoughts. This is just acceptable, since what is lacking in verisimilitude is made up for in inventiveness, but like most of the characters, Gabby suffers by being essentially unrecognizable as a person. Astley is very good at the revealing cameo of a minor eccentric or fanatic, but her major characters fail because she continually forces on them myths they cannot support. There is too much overt and inappropriate symbolism surrounding the festival of Christmas ("the town was lying discarded in the heat and rain of its own Bethlehem") and both Wafer ("'Sacramental?' Wafer asks") and Moon, his counterpart, take on Christ-like/Devilish overtones. But these characters do not possess the inner resources that make, say, Randolph Stow's Diviner in *Tourmaline* both fearful and affecting. Given to such statements as "I was conceived . . . behind the point where two seas meet", Wafer is impossible to imagine.

The narrative, experimental and blinding, promotes an essentially unreal world where only words have much significance. Although the preoccupation with human frailties and prejudices remains, *Beachmasters* shows Astley's talent blossoming into a more expressive and imaginative medium. Mature, enquiring and often verbally stunning, this latest novel centres on the pathetic grab for independence by the natives of the tiny (fictional) island of Kristi. The novel is not essentially political – despite a certain topicality – except in so far as it chips away at the old myths of patriotism and colonialism. Familiar ground this may be, but Astley's approach is inward and intimate. In the struggle for national identity, she says, no one, however decent or innocent, can remain neutral. The real struggle is a personal one, as in the case of the young *hapkas* (half-caste) Gavi Salway, "the boy always on the wavering perimeters of discovery" whose own identity is formed and proved along with that of the island. Ironically, the puny revolution will reveal many a deficient soul, puncture many a self-deception, colonial and native, and not even the wry, charismatic chief, Tommy Narota himself, will escape unscathed.

Inevitably, the revolution, innocuous from the first ("Pardon, madame, tomorrow we *make protest march. Tomorrow there will be* revolution"), gutters and dies, the government troops are welcomed with songs and garlands, and official independence, still only a pathetic parody of national freedom, is ushered in. Most impressive throughout is Astley's delicate treading of the fine line between poignancy and absurdity – nowhere more effectively than in the glorious anti-climax of the moment of secession.

The story is vigorously sustained through a series of interacting scenes, but the real vitality comes from the language of the "triple-tongued" island itself where English, French and pidjin (Seaspeak) fuse and confuse. The ambiguities of a situation where pidjin can be a colonial insult or a mark of belonging are explored with ingenuity and humour, and the whole is punctuated by Seaspeak refrains: *"Smôl tal'm"*, *"pastal'm bifor"*, *"long wé, long wé"*, drifting elegiacally through the narrative. In all respects a more satisfying novel than its predecessor, *Beachmasters* shows Thea Astley at her subtle, illuminating best.

Wonder currencies

Kevin Brown

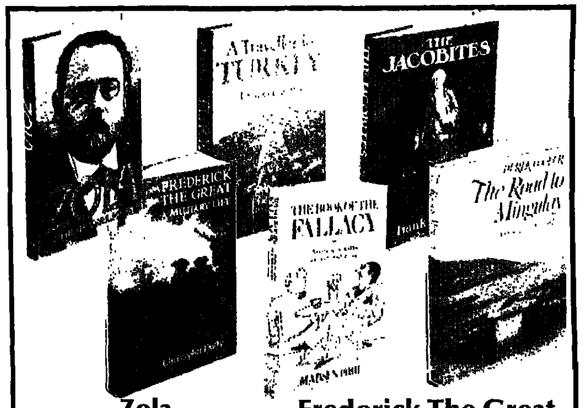
JANET FRAME
Owls Do Cry
173pp. The Women's Press. Paperback, £3.50.
0 7043 39587

Patrick White proclaimed Janet Frame "The most considerable New Zealand novelist yet". Her first novel, *Owls Do Cry* (1961), has now been reissued by the Women's Press, whose cover, among subtler considerations, makes a case for abandoning the colonial qualifier and acknowledging her "as one of the most considerable novelists world-wide". At the very least, their enterprise (they now have five of her novels in print, plus three volumes of autobiography) makes a case for revaluation.

Like most of Frame's fiction, *Owls Do Cry* is a tale of metamorphosis, of one Daphne's transformation. In Depression New Zealand, the Withers family – Toby, Chicks, Daphne and their parents – live out their blighted lives. The children play amid the refuse of the rubbish dump that seems the perfect metaphor for their marginal existence. But there is treasure there as well, old books and ledgers and bits of broken appliances – to children "dangling, doing nothing, caught in the scruff of the neck by afternoon", the "wonder currencies" of living.

Characteristically, the novel betrays an almost musical sense of structure and style. Part One, "Talk of Treasure", unfolds as an exposition of characters and ideas to be developed at length in the middle section, "Twenty Years After". Here, the Withers children, now grown, lead their separate lives. Toby, a newly licensed dealer in second-hand goods, has substituted for childish treasure-hunting an almost pathological obsession with "grown up treasure": money. Chicks, entangled in a garb of corrective tastes as confining as any straitjacket, is now a suburban housewife, *her* life a package deal of French novels, underground coffee, subscription concerts and guided tours to "places that really matter". The final "Epilogue" concerns the fate of Daphne herself, whose delphic arias, sung from the bolted confines of a psychiatric keep, constitute throughout a solo chorus of free-verse incantation – entire chapters of Ophelianic obbligato that rest on the haunting refrain: "Sings Daphne from the Dead Room." Eventually, Daphne, whose *madness* was but transcendent sanity, is made to undergo the shaving of her head, a frontal lobotomy to make her "normal", and is given a wig to hide the wound.

In the light of later works and autobiography, *Owls Do Cry* seems a kind of personal archaeology, painstaking and intensely felt. We know now of Frame's own nine years' entombment in psychiatric wards, of the more than two hundred applications of shock treatment that left her past in ashes. *It is moving to* watch her torchlit wandering in the labyrinth of memory. Yet her later efforts never quite fulfilled the enormous promise hinted at here.



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Sussex watersheds

Tim Dooley

TED WALKER
You've Never Heard Me Sing: Short stories
232pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
0434 840106

The gradual decline in Ted Walker's reputation as a poet since his widely-praised début with *Fox on A Barn Door* in 1965 has coincided with a growing recognition of his achievement as a prose-writer. The interest created by his 1982 autobiography *The High Path* and his plays for radio and television will be strengthened by the publication of this collection of his short fiction. *You've Never Heard Me Sing* brings together twenty-one stories which have appeared, mainly in the *New Yorker* and other prestigious American magazines, at regular intervals over the last seventeen years. The range of theme and setting is deliberately circumscribed. Apart from two regrettable excursions to a blarneyfied Emerald Isle and some visits to his father's county of Worcestershire, the territory Walker explores is the Sussex coast where he was born and where he has spent most of his adult life. The time-span in the stories moves from the Depression of the 1930s to the present day, but when Walker marks the passing of time he is generally more interested in patterns of recurrence than in either development or decay.

His best stories capture sudden shifts in feeling or understanding between people: turning points in marriage, friendships, family relationships, which could serve equally well to heal rifts or open new wounds. In "Stephen, Steve, Stevie" the shifting uses of formal, familiar and diminutive versions of the Christian name shared by three generations of the same family denote watersheds in a subtly changing pattern of dependence. In "Discobolus" a young athlete's rejection of the competitive is understood by his once inseparable friend only years later, not long before the former discus champion dies in a gliding accident. Often, stories hinge on some revelation about the past – a pattern of suicide and madness marked by effaced names in a family Bible ("The Skein"), a great-uncle's incestuous relationship with his sister, spoken of, once only, after both their deaths ("Caleb"). Typically these revelations lead Walker's narrators to greater understanding not only of their families but of themselves, a sense of resemblance or a clarified memory illuminating momentarily the confusions of awkward natures and ties.

Despite their rural setting and celebration of traditional skills and manners, the stories in *You've Never Heard Me Sing* avoid, for the most part, the temptations of nostalgia or sentimentality. Though sometimes wooden in longer stretches of dialogue, Walker's style has a lyrical movement whose delicate cadences are well matched to the more tender observations of someone quite prepared to take a full view of the worst. Miraculous gluts of fish, perfect out-of-season peaches, over-abundant apple-harvests function in his stories not as aspects of an idyll but as ironic contrasts to his characters' disappointments. "In *Kittiwake*" pictures a character "up to the ankles in fish, shovelling them out for the birds . . . what a waste it was". The narrator of "The Peaches" crushes part of his excess crop in his hand: "the juice and the mashed white flesh oozed between my fingers to spoil, untasted, on the grass".

These images symbolize the cloying pointlessness of love offered but not enjoyed. Such moments of rejection or refusal recur in other stories, creating a unity of mood in this very satisfying, quietly moving book.

Hampstead serenities

Christopher Hawtree

JOHN BRAINE
These Golden Days
187pp. Methuen. £8.95.
0413 54350 1

An author knows that he is a success when his work begins to appear in the Lancastria edition. This, the publisher's edition durably rebound by one of the library suppliers, cannot be found in bookshops, it does not receive any publicity, and is far from being obvious in the libraries for which it is designed. The accolade, one which John Braine was awarded relatively early and has continued to receive, and which has been made palatable by Public Lending Right, should be of paramount interest to a writer. As the author-narrator of Braine's *One and Last Love* remarks, "I like it better than my first. No one else did. Except the public."

Critical opprobrium has danced merrily on many of Braine's productions, with the result that every now and then interviewers are confidently informed that a metropolitan conspiracy exists. Once the theory has been invented, facts are sought to fit it, and no one pauses to reflect on the vanity of imagining that journalists are so obsessed by one's character and success that they should want to use the public presses to deflate them.

This state of affairs makes it more difficult than it ought to be to write about *These Golden Days*, *One and Last Love*, to which it forms a sequel, veered between heavy drinking sessions and ecstatic sexual bouts, the whole work being flooded with brand names. The title of the new book, which derives from "September Song", is another indication of the author's interest in popular music, and of the novel's ambition, one which it almost inevitably fails to achieve. For Tim Harnforth is a happy man. Apart from the passage in which he goes to bed early and reads *Laughing Gas*, it is difficult to understand why. After two wretched marriages, he is now living in a small Hampstead flat, where he is regularly, and more than equably, visited by Vivien, his mistress of several years' standing. He has achieved a serenity that such a setting and such circumstances, despite his Northern upbringing and unfortunate experiences, should not necessarily render incredible.

For all its addresses to the reader, *These Golden Days*, much like the earlier volume, never takes one inside Harnforth's mind or allows us really to appreciate this hard-won well-being. Whether he is fulminating against the rampant acquisitiveness which he terms "the Brent Cross Syndrome", or describing his own past horrors and present content, the prose remains uniformly flat. "My body is an Irish navvy's body, a Regimental Sergeant-Major's body, built more for endurance than for speed", he reasserts. His survival amid all the buffeting would indeed be a heartening *thing if only one could believe in it*, but each topographical detail, each brand name only weakens the realism.

"I'll let it mash, as we say in Yorkshire", Harnforth remarks when bringing a tea-pot to the table. The ingredients of *These Golden Days* are no less palatable for being familiar, but no amount of time will do them good without the infusion of a genuine point of view and tight, vigorous organization.

Scunthorpe revelations

Tony Sattin

STEPHEN BENATAR
Such Men are Dangerous
205pp. Scunthorpe Borough Council, Civic Centre, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN16 1AB. Paperback, £2.95.
0947777032

How does one react to the news that an angel has appeared to two schoolboys in the car-park behind Tiffany's, a Mecca night-spot in Scunthorpe, and has given them a message "that God's pretty cheesed off with the world", that love will overcome selfishness and helplessness and put an end to all evils if everyone would only try? "People have to be made to realize – wake up – take action."

The two men referred to in the title of Stephen Benatar's fourth novel react in what appear to be opposite ways: the boys' father Joshua Heath, a long-term unemployed teacher, sacked from his last school for sleeping with one of his fifth-year girls, is cynical about the revelation, but sees it as an opportunity to escape the dole queue – and his family – by selling the story to a newspaper. Simon Madison, the get-ahead, broad-shouldered vicar, who found God after the death of his young wife, treads cautiously, balancing his natural enthusiasm with professional experience, "working out how best to spread the message". Although he is a liberal churchman, entertaining doubts about theological tenets, assessing himself with the aid of labels ("Simon the Self-Pitier . . . Simon the Insincere . . ."), and although he knows that he wishes to succeed "in a worldly sense", Simon seems unaware that he too is using the miracle to escape, both from the guilt he feels over his wife's death, and, more practically, from Scunthorpe, by gaining promotion.

That by the climax of the novel these two are the only members of the congregation who are prepared to walk to London – "a journey such as Christ sent his apostles out on" – accompanied by a reformed journalist who has been covering the story for a national newspaper, seems just right; the vicar having omitted to say what he intended to do when he got there and Josh using the march to run out on his wife without saying goodbye.

There is a trend among writers – and their characters – to look to their locality, rather than their nationality or political ideals, for their identity. Scunthorpe Borough Council's laudable if unusual decision to publish Benatar's novel seems to support this. Benatar, however, not himself a native of Scunthorpe, has chosen to make his main characters newcomers to the town, which has resulted in a surprising lack of local detail and dialect. Instead, they are characterized by references to old movies, novels and plays, and they inevitably suffer for it.

Such Men Are Dangerous is a heart-felt piece of writing, at times even surprisingly powerful as a rallying-call, and the way that both Simon and Josh are brought to some kind of realization at the end is satisfying. When references are made, though, to the destructive unseen pressures from above which act on the characters (from government and big business, not from God), the author's frustration breaks through and stands beyond the controlled narrative voice. The irony and pathos used to great effect in Benatar's earlier works, most notably in *Wish Her Safe At Home*, is missing here.

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Contradictions of the heart

Anthony Fothergill

PETER HANDKE
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Translated by Ralph Manheim
243pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0436 190885
Slow Homecoming
Translated by Ralph Manheim
278pp. Methuen. £9.95.
0 413 47150 0

Peter Handke's record of two years of life in Paris from November 1975 to March 1977 is thoroughly pervaded by confrontations with forms of mortality. A "booming, deafening fear of death" is registered on almost every page (the pages consisting of many hundreds of brief observations and meditations, "verbal reflexes" to "events of consciousness"). It is relieved but never fully and finally eradicated by moods of contempt, anger, tenderness and even occasionally bliss. This anxiety is understandably at its most acute during a brief stay in hospital where Handke undergoes observation for a heart complaint. Then, when not just his body but his very self is felt to be most under threat, the divisions of interior and exterior world collapse, and panic causes him to see the scratches on the wall, even his own handwriting, as an erratic electrocardiogram. For his "complaint" is as much his psychical registering of the oppressive weight of the world as it is a physical "condition". "For a good part of my life I fought off the outside world with all my soul, and now that I think myself open to it, it attacks *my body*."

The anxiety occasioned by this self-exposure is the price of Handke's penetrating perception not just of things *in extremis* but of the everyday: "the squeak of a cork wants to give me the death blow". His subject is daily life as he lives it, and as he observes himself and others living it – on the *métro*, in the cinema, doing the housework, walking in the streets, hearing Sunday sounds in neighbouring apartments, taking his daughter to school (the list, like the everyday, indeed like "the journal", is endless). It is shot through with moments of fear, doubt, bitterness and sorrow; small acts of inhumanity and small acts of love. At moments Handke would almost agree with Brecht that the man who is still laughing has simply not yet heard the terrible news.

Writing the journal is a way of reacting to the moment as well as preserving it. "Tense, unnerved and close to madness before writing – and when I read what I've written it looks so calm." "I have sat all night and written and now I am agreeably tired." Only the first is Handke; the other is Rilke's Malte Laurids Brigge. Handke quotes frequently from the writers he is reading (Goethe, Kafka, John Cowper Powys, Walter Benjamin, Jane Austen, Katherine Mansfield, Novalis, Doderer, Brecht); Rilke is silently present but is never mentioned except in a sort of parody. Malte's "It is raining into my eyes" becomes "It's starting to rain. . . . 'Wide as he opened his eyes, no world went in or out'." Like those earlier notebooks, Handke's journal liberates itself in all but chronology from the generic conventions of diary or autobiography, at the same time as and because its controlling subject – the perceiving self – is radically disrupted. The most immediate sign of this is the absence of a sequential narration of external events. The reader has to recognize and reconstruct for himself the hospital visit, the death of a friend, changes of apartment, trips to the South of France. Secondly, there is the elevation to principal structuring device of quotation and the quotable gesture, decontextualized and not embedded in commentary or narration. This might stem in part from the initial purpose of the journal (indicated in a preface that is included in the German though not in Ralph Manheim's otherwise fine translation).

Slow Homecoming was started as a professional workbook, a collection of impressions and observations of others' gestures, which Handke was to use in a play or story. Traces of this aim are still there – "I'm standing by the photo machine waiting for pictures; a picture with a different face comes out – this could be the beginning of a story." But Handke abandons this programmatic selection of observations in favour of a much freer, spontaneous recording, "quoting", of unwilled moments of perception, his task being "to gear my thoughts to the few moments each day when the painfully speechless stammering world speaks clearly", to "rediscover the forgotten anonymous language of all mankind and it will shine in self-evidence".

With this aim in mind it is not surprising that any kind of rehearsed formulation and thought, or clichéd language and behaviour (including his own) becomes suspect. Advertising is thus a particular target of Handke's scorn: "An advertisement tells me that life is beautiful – a personal insult!" A universal speech is not easily won, and it is rather through negation and contradiction that it is sensed: "He said furiously: 'We don't speak the same language!' (At last he had understood what I was trying to say.)" This contradiction is at the heart of Handke's articulation of himself, which oscillates from a sense of sure singleness ("my greatness; being alone") through painful separateness ("there is no solution, the eternal cleavage between me and the world") to its opposite, a dissolution of the self: "The cranky old woman at the news-stand, the park in the soft subdued light, the ugly mug of the lady walking her dog – *I* am all these."

Nowhere are the depth and poignancy of the ordinary more movingly and unsentimentally realized than in those entries concerning Handke's relationship with his daughter. With A(mina) he is in revolt against the affectations, deceits and petty victories of the adult world. Here the warmth and humour most powerfully intrude – "A. drew a picture of Frau F.; she began with the pimple on her face" or "In the middle of the night A. patted *me*, because *she* had had a nightmare." For these moments alone the reader would be grateful for the appearance of this journal.

It is a barely fictional account of this father–daughter relationship which is the subject of *Child Story*, the last of a collection of the most recent of Handke's works brought together in *Slow Homecoming*. "A trilogy of novels", as the publishers describe them, they reveal continuities of theme, imagery and almost visionary poetic voice. Handke makes an arduous, eloquent, at times painful (and sometimes painfully wordy) return from depicting a solitary figure "nowhere at home" to a self celebrating a new-found and hard-won harmony with the world.

But his journey is a digressive one, and the arrival delayed. It starts, in *The Long Way Around*, with Sorger, an Austrian geologist whose work and temperament find him in an Alaskan settlement within the Arctic Circle where something far more powerful than professional duty drives him to the intense observation and notation of landscape and natural phenomena. In "magical" moments of "comprehensive vision" of these primordial forms, in looking at "a groove in the rock, a change of colour in the mud", Sorger, "who scarcely belonged anywhere", experiences a transfiguring sense of place which "enabled him to construct himself and make himself invulnerable". But this mystical selfhood is achieved in geographical and emotional isolation – with the exception of a comparably mystical (but also sexual) relationship he has with "the Indian woman" through whom Sorger "first experienced the weight of the world". He feels compelled to return to Europe "to find his fellows" within a known culture, within a home country. So starts his unfinished trip back to "my world and my century", moving (via California, the Rockies and New York) from an elemental pre-linguistic "nameless Nature" towards a world of crowds, a "world of names".

We leave Sorger literally in mid-flight for Europe and land, in the second novel, *The Lesson of Mont Sainte-Victoire*, in Provence where the first-person narrator, on his way home to Austria, circling through Europe and impelled "to take the long way round", is writing a story about a geologist, Sorger. The account he offers of the genesis and slow maturation of the Sorger story is paralleled in, indeed generated by, the narrator's (or Handke's) encounter with Cézanne, as he retraces the artist's steps in the mountain landscape which provided the central subject for so many of his paintings. As an essay on a writer's discovery of painting and on the techniques of intense observation ("extreme immersion and extreme attention"), as a model for his own

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The darkness of Troy

Joyce Crick

CHRISTA WOLF
Cassandra: A novel and four essays
Translated by Jan van Heurck
305pp. Virago. £10.95 (paperback, £4.50).
0 86068 568 3

creative activity (echoes, here, of Rilke), and as a homage to a painter whose *réalisations* taught Handke the redeeming power of art – a "transformation and sheltering of things endangered" – this work provides a strong and resonant centre for the whole book.

If Cézanne's painting teaches Handke vision, and if this "miracle can open up the world for us mortals for all time", in *Child Story* the "visionary" is "the adult" (an amalgam of Sorger and his creator) whose "unique work" is to give form and voice to "the secret of the world". It is a secret he has access to through "the child" with whom he lives mostly alone and whom, with increasing paternal love and wonder, he watches growing from babyhood to her tenth year, as they move back and forth from "the Metropolis" to rural setting and from country to country. The two live like conspirators "in the night of the century and in the empty crypt of the continent". For "the adult" (almost always so called, never "Dad", sometimes "the eyewitness", and "I" only at moments of extreme pressure), "the child" becomes "the heroine of frightening, sublime, ridiculous and on the whole plausible everyday-eternal happenings" – redeeming moments which partake of the universal. But the visionary and universal can be too easily won, and run the risk of looking not at the particular thing but through it. Though Handke claims to recognize her as "a person in her own right", too often "the child" is made to *stand for*, rather than *be*. The translation of the title, without the expected possessive, helps to indicate that this story is not hers and, had she been allowed to, she might well have told a different one.

Handke strives to re-animate language to achieve a transfiguring directness, but the most recurrent device (it is hard not to call it that), the anonymity of address ("the adult", "the child", "the Metropolis", "the Indian woman" in *The Long Way Around*), which might signify constructive and refreshing linguistic estrangement, in fact more often creates an obfuscating, mythologizing effect. There *are* more prosaic, convincing passages – the adult registering for the first time how his daily life is regulated by the child's rhythm, sounds and belongings; the isolated child in a foreign school; most memorably, the man brutally hitting the child in frustrated anger when the apartment floods. But whereas in *The Weight of the World* such moments are directly and sharply rendered and, through the provisional, fragmentary form, the self-ironic juxtapositions and the lack of commentary allowed simply to stand, here they are frequently made to work too hard towards a meaning which the language does not convincingly deliver.

The Manheim translation – on the whole careful, sympathetic and light – at times reveals through its colloquialism the problems with the meaningful profundity of the original. Seeing depth in everything, "the adult sees the enlightened all-knowing countenance behind the baby face, and the calm, ageless eyes give him now and for all time a look of friendship; for two cents he would hide his face and weep." For two cents.

Christa Wolf's most recent work is a black parable of the painful disengagement of a loyalty, and of the recovery of humane values among the peaceable women beyond the pale. Once – though it now seems a long time ago – the favourite daughter of the East German literary establishment, and still a committed and humane Socialist, Wolf has moved very close to the peace movement and its feminine supporters. With *Cassandra* she has moved on from her experiments in contemporary fictional biography and autobiography, to an allegory of corruption and war from the beginnings of Western culture.

In the Spring of 1981 Wolf was invited to give the prestigious *Lectures in Poetics at the University of Frankfurt am Main*. Their urgency and grace made these a best-seller when they were published in West Germany, and, after some delay, controversy and visible signs of censorship, in East Germany too. Characteristically, Wolf disavowed the expected format of the formal lecture. In the fifth and final one she had Cassandra tell her own story retrospectively, from the brink of death, as she enters the Lion Gate of Mycenae as Agamemnon's booty, to meet Clytemnestra's axe. The four lectures leading up to it are an account of the premisses, public and private, of its writing. They take the form of travelogue, diary, letter. Their apparent casualness is an illusion created by careful art: everything is thematic, from the little boys playing soldiers in the airport lounge to the radiant cherry-tree in the Mecklenburg garden. "Prose" is the non-committal term by which Wolf describes the continuum of essay and fiction in her writing – though it is often very poetic. She uses the personal genres of letter and journal to convey that "fourth dimension" which, she claims, is nowadays as important in a text as the traditional triad of narrator-story-reader: that is, the latent or overt presence of the author as subject. If her Cassandra has a higher profile and seems far more independent than most of Wolf's earlier figures, it is because the matrix of reflections out of which she emerged has been presented separately and distinctly in the first four lectures. It seems inappropriate, therefore, that the English publishers should have printed the story first and the preliminaries second.

In *Cassandra* there is none of the blurring of self and character that is produced when Christa W. writes about "Christa T." in her earlier novel, *The Quest for Christa T.* The transition from author to narrator here is accomplished in a single line, indeed in a single pronoun: "As *I* tell this tale, I approach death." And the story is no longer set in the modern GDR, but in a Troy whose self-induced beleaguerment functions as a model for the tensions of modern world. The threat to the individual from the states, and the threat to the species from war, hang over all. The private pleasures of hospitality and talk with friends are vulnerable. Like her near-despair at the arms race and at preparations for war, Wolf's obsession with Cassandra, which takes her to Greece and leads to her quarrel with Aeschylus and Homer, also engages with man-made images of women and man-made modes of writing. The lectures are an approach towards a feminine poetics: she rejects the forward march of the heroic epic in favour of the web of memory, and a style which anticipates, darts backwards, catches up on itself. "Alongside the river of heroic songs this tiny stream may reach those . . . faraway people in times to come."

Into this short work Wolf has woven most of the mythological and historical sources of the tale of Troy, bending them to her new purposes, shifting the emphasis away from the heroic to the horror and the harm done to women. Achilles is simply "Achilles the brute" throughout. Priam is a cosseted figure-head, Hecuba the matriarch behind the throne who loses out in the power-manoeuvres. Penthesilea is the extreme feminist, Helen the source of the greatest deception of all, for Paris never brought her to Troy, but left her behind in Egypt, as the other legend had it. The ostensible motive for war was a chimera, a lie. The war was in fact waged for access to the Bosporus. Cassandra herself is not a visionary, but an intelligent, clear-sighted daughter who moves from loyalty to disillusion because the reigning house will not listen to her truth and want her to tell their lies. When she refuses, she is cast out into the darkness of prison and despair, recovering only as she shelters with the other outcast women, the worshippers of the Magna Mater, outside the walls. The gloom is lit by such figures as old Anchises, whose shrewd humanity resists the universal corruption, and by Aeneas, Cassandra's lover (and the token good partner), who leads the survivors away. But Cassandra will not go with him, for she knows he will have to become a hero like the rest, enter a new epic – the founding of Rome – and commit himself willy-nilly to the corrupting values that destroyed Troy. She would rather die than collude with that.

The anti-heroic mode is not new, but this work is remarkable in both its density and its darkness. It confronts the extremities of experience, violent, erotic, despairing, in ways that are new to Wolf, and perhaps only possible within the distancing frame of ancient tales, however contemporary the values which inform her reading of them.

Since Wolf has now developed a substantial public abroad, it is important to look at the quality of her translators. She was fortunate that the first translation – Christopher Middleton's *The Quest for Christa T.* – was so good. The same cannot be said of the rest. The rendering of her autobiographical novel *Kindheitsmuster* is a disgrace from the title to the final page, even taking into account the particular problems of colloquialism, over-discursiveness and grammar it presents. What is more, it has been silently edited by a thousand cuts. The versions of *Kein Ort, Nirgends* and *Kassandra* at best serve their purpose, but even in the present book there are solecisms, misleading descriptions of genre and innumerable blurred solutions where the not-utterly-wrong-but-not-quite-right word has been chosen. More important than the local problems, the general difficulty in translating Christa Wolf lies in rendering her distinctive combination of intensity of tone (which does not exclude a buried irony) with the broken syntax and spoken rhythms of recollection and reflection. She is worth better than the attempt that has been made here.

Contacts curtailed

John Neves

MARTIN WALSER
Messmers Gedanken
106pp. DM24. 3 518 03222 4
Brandung
319pp. DM34. 3 518 03570 3
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

To those who know Martin Walser as Germany's most gifted writer of comic novels, *Messmers Gedanken* must come as a disappointment. It is a collection of thoughts, sometimes whole trains of thought, sometimes pithy aphorisms, passing through the head of a typically incompetent, inadequate Walser hero. Between the first aphorism ("Von allen Stimmen, die aus mir sprechen, ist meine die schwächste") and the last ("Wenn ich meine Mütze aufsetze, bin ich, denkt Messmer") lie one hundred pages of similar self-mortification, sometimes in the first person, sometimes narrated – a confusion of technique which is quite unnecessary.

At first sight, Walser would seem to be aiming at a junction with the *nouveau roman* tradition, with his original format and strictly limited narrative scope. But *Messmers Gedanken* is still far too realistic and psychologically detailed to be a *nouveau roman*. Messmer, however disagreeable his constant efforts to avoid real human contact and avoid seeing any purpose in existence, is not a narrator through whom the form of the novel can be "purified".

What is so conspicuously missing in this work is the social dimension: we never see Messmer talking to others or working out any action (apart from taking steps to avoid them) with people. This undermines the author's *raison d'être* as a major critic of West German society. In his earlier books he has been at pains to show us exactly what happens when someone born with a low quantum of energy and ambition has to enter the lists in the world of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, and the inevitable tilting at windmills is both sad and funny. But Messmer, who never even tries to live in society, forfeits our sympathy throughout.

Returning to the novel, Walser has given us in *Brandung* an idyllic vision of life far away from the oppressive competitiveness of Swabia. It is the story of Helmut Halm's four-month trip to California. This idyll of a professorial existence on a San Francisco campus contains more deaths than *Hamlet*, but somehow the numerous suicides, accidents and fatal illnesses do not prevent the author from swinging along through one of the funniest books he has written, and, self-deprecating though he remains throughout, sketching out an idea of happiness.

In the first and last chapters we see Helmut Halm, a fifty-five-year old schoolmaster with a wife and two grown-up daughters, struggling with life in Stuttgart. As always, he feels unequal to the game of one-upmanship his colleagues are constantly playing, and inhibited and inferior towards women, his devoted wife apart. But an old friend, Rainer Mersjohann, professor of German at a Californian university, lets him know that one of their staff has dropped out at the last moment. Would Halm care to fill the gap for four months?

Naturally a love story develops under the blue skies of California: one of Halm's students follows him about with almost canine faithfulness, and, angry with himself for being drawn into this situation, Halm responds, giving her advice on her essays for other dons, and towards the end of the book at last coming out of his shell at a hilarious party she throws at her flat just days before he is due to leave. Here he drinks so much that he topples over while he is dancing with her, gives himself a black eye as he hits the ironwork surrounding the hearth, and ends up in hospital instead of consummating his romance.

Some of the best (and funniest) parts of the books involve minor characters, such as his colleagues on the staff of the German department. As always with Walser's heroes, Halm is hopelessly incompetent as a paterfamilias, his marriage seems to be founded on the rock of his own unmanliness, he lacks both authority and insight *vis-à-vis* his daughters, who go their own ways more or less disastrously, and when he returns to Stuttgart, there seems to be little left to say to his family. Once the idyll is over, we return to Walser's home territory with a vengeance.

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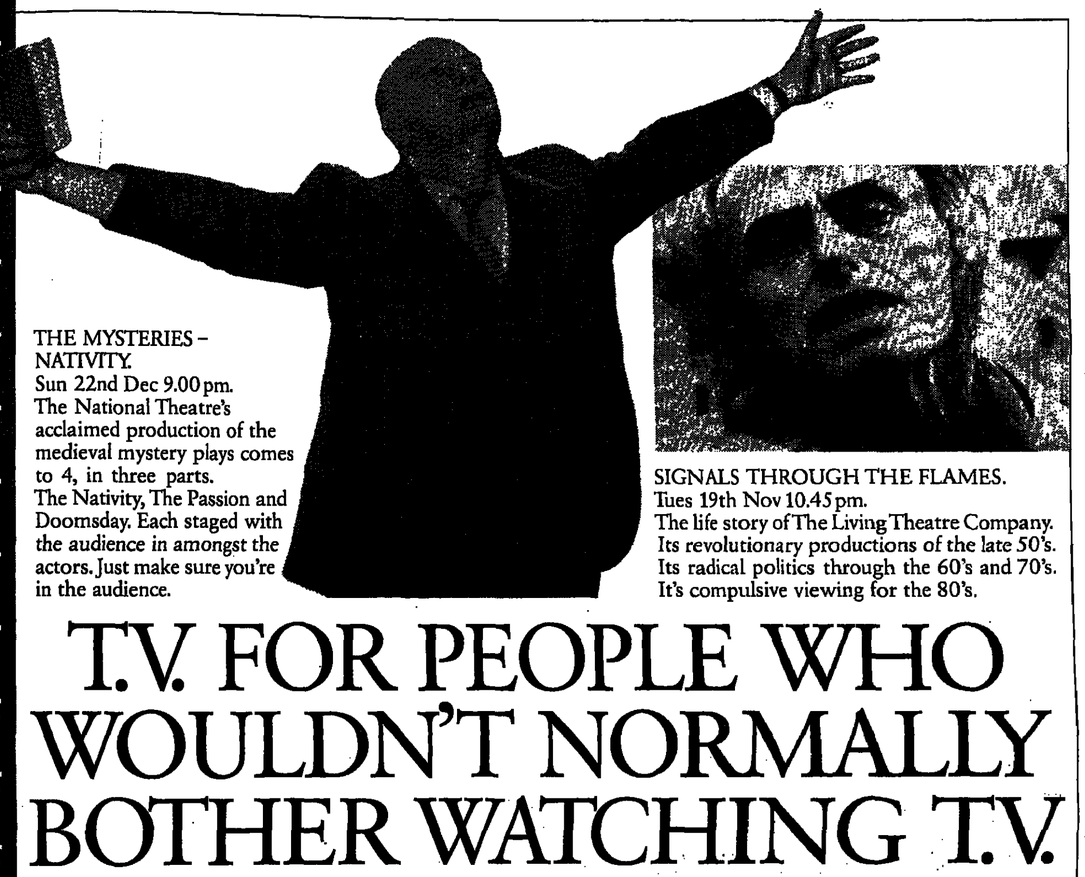

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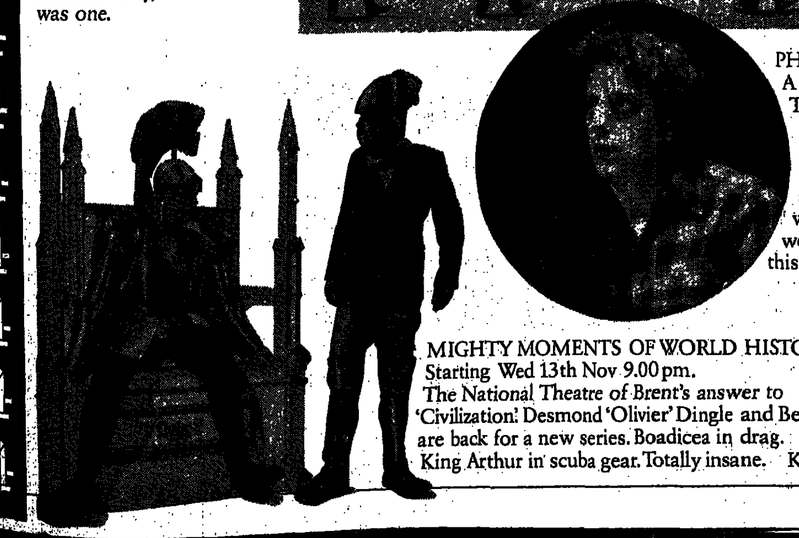

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STUART BROWN
Leibniz
223pp. Brighton: Harvester. £22.50.
0 7108 0546 2
NICHOLAS JOLLEY
Leibniz and Locke: A Study of the "New Essays on Human Understanding"
125pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0 19 875064 1

Like composers, philosophers of the past go up and down in public esteem, and their influence grows and diminishes in uncanny ways. As was the case earlier with Descartes and Kant, Leibniz is now treated as a thinker who can provide a point of departure for our own philosophical thoughts, rather than as a philosopher who produced a conceptual system of mainly historical interest.

Of the two books under review, Stuart Brown's *Leibniz* is the more ambitious – and indeed unique of its kind. Unlike other commentaries in English, it tries to trace Leibniz's thoughts historically, both in the context of his disputes with his predecessors and contemporaries, and in the development of his own thoughts through his long active life. And unlike similar works written on the Continent, it invokes contemporary philosophical discussions in examining Leibniz's arguments. One of Dr Brown's main contentions is that Leibniz was primarily a problem-solver, rather than the system-builder that he was often claimed to be. His other main contention is that Leibniz should not be regarded as a rationalist; or more exactly, that the later Leibniz turned against his early Cartesianism and was, as far as his theory of knowledge goes, more of an empiricist of the hypothetico-deductive kind. As one who has long asserted that calling Leibniz a rationalist does injustice to his thinking, and who admires his problem-solving turn of mind, I am glad to see these points documented by Brown's judicious selection from Leibniz's works.

Whether Locke was the champion empiricist and Leibniz his rationalist critic, or whether it was more or less the other way around, is a question also examined by Nicholas Jolley in his *Leibniz and Locke*. In this much narrower but carefully argued work, Dr Jolley contends that the aim of the *Nouveaux Essais* (which Leibniz wrote late in life in the form of a dialogue with a defender of Locke's *Essay*) was not so much to combat Locke's theory of knowledge (as has customarily been thought) as to attack a materialist theory of mind. Such a theory, Jolley claims, was inherent in the beliefs of the Socinians, a heretic Christian sect (whom Jolley describes as the forerunners of the Unitarians and Deists) towards which Locke was suspected of leaning. Jolley's book contains as an appendix a translation of one of the many hundreds of yet unpublished manuscripts of Leibniz kept in Hannover, this one attacking Unitarian metaphysics.

I do not think that the identification of an author's motive, even if correct, necessarily gives or explains the important features of a work. Nevertheless Jolley's new perspective on *Nouveaux Essais* makes us see the importance for Leibniz of a problem that is also raised by Brown: how we are to have a guarantee that each mind is different from another, and how we are to individuate it. Brown's approach helps us understand and keep apart different views that Leibniz held about the same problem in different periods of his life. Yet his reading of some central doctrines of Leibniz is debatable. I will focus on just two: essences and individual concepts.

According to Brown, Leibniz was committed, in his mature period of the *Discourse of Metaphysics* of 1686, "to a radical nominalism which did not accept nature or essences" of natural kinds such as gold. Brown even claims that for Leibniz the world does not contain natural kinds but only particulars. But what kind of view is he ascribing here to Leibniz? That Caesar, for example, was a particular without being a particular person or animal? That there is no nature common to this piece of gold and that piece of gold? Brown writes that for Leibniz individual essences exist but no general essences. But this is quite contrary to the tenor of Leibniz's own remarks. In a letter written in the same year as the *Discourse*, he uses the expressions "under the aspect of generality", "under the aspect of the essence", "under the aspect of species and incomplete notions" all on a par. And, as Jolley points out, in the *Nouveaux Essais* he claims that "it is essential to substance to act, to created substance to be acted upon, to mind to think, to bodies to have extension and motion". These are the essences of any individual substance, but they are not individual (as distinct from general) essences. They are not necessary properties unique to one individual.

As a matter of fact, Leibniz's nominalism is hardly radical. In an early work, he severely criticizes the nominalism of an Italian philosopher, Nizolius, who claimed that universals were nothing more than aggregates of individuals, and the nominalism of Hobbes, who said that universals depended on our will, or our decisions to group things together and name them in conventional ways. He nevertheless defends a nominalistic view which he ascribes to Ockham and (contrary to Brown's suggestion) to Aristotle himself. This is the view that takes as fundamental the idea of concrete things. Leibniz's Aristotle says that things of which we can ask the question "how big is it?", "what is it like?", "how is it related to what?" are prior to quantity, quality or relation. The world can be explained without reference to real (independently existing) universals or forms. What is real are concrete individuals. These, of course, have certain modes of being including certain qualities. Leibniz thought, however, that the latter are not entities that exist on their own in addition to individuals. They depend on the relation of individuals to our understanding. We can designate them as abstract entities only after we grasp how individual things are.

As Brown shows, what Leibniz considered to be the basic individuals changed from his early years (when he thought in terms of things of daily life or corporeal substances) to the later period of the monadology. But his belief that individuals were the basic existents did not alter. This is (*pace* Brown) compatible with his belief that there were objective truths about essences or species that we could discover. He thus came to see that there was something in the Aristotelian notion of substantial forms as well as in the notion of nature which Boyle and the modern scientists were trying to abandon. Indeed, as some of us have pointed out and as Jolley stresses, there is a great similarity between Leibniz's view of natural kinds and those defended in recent years by Putnam and Kripke. Brown writes that Leibniz was in disagreement with Aristotle on universals; but Leibniz's criticism is directed to later Scholastics who, he believes, misunderstood Aristotle and talked of forms and species as if they were real entities. Leibniz's main disagreements with Aristotle were with the latter's view of the mind as a blank sheet, which required sensation to acquire any knowledge and (as Brown indicates) with the Thomist-Aristotelian view that material things can be individuated by the stuff they are made of even if they have all their properties in common.

From Leibniz's contemporary Arnauld onwards, most commentators have been troubled by the seeming contradiction between Leibniz's view of individual concepts (concepts corresponding to individual substances and containing all true predicates of it) and his belief in the contingency of many truths about individuals. If the concept of Caesar includes the truth of his crossing the Rubicon, it may appear that it would have been necessary that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Many have thought that there is a special difficulty about the coexistence of individual concepts and human freedom.

Brown attempts to resolve the difficulty by reading Leibniz with what appears to me to be an existentialist twist. He claims that Leibniz allows for two ways of thinking of individuals. One is God's way, in which things are completely individuated *sub ratione possibilitatis* and where all the links are atemporal and fixed. This way, says Brown, is available to human beings only at their deathbed. The other way, *sub ratione generalitatis*, is, according to Brown, how we think of ourselves: as this way leaves open details that are not determined by our general thought, it enables us to choose. But such a reading surely does not do justice to Leibniz, who did not think that thinking in possibilities and generalities were mutually exclusive, and for whom the very common way we think of individuals is indexical and contextual. I know that I just collided with one definite individual, not because I know any feature which distinguishes her from all other possible individuals, but because there was only one person I collided with. This is the only actual world, and each of us is unique in it.

Jolley joins some contemporary commentators in claiming that belief in individual concepts leads to "super-essentialism" – the view that every property of an individual is necessary to it. This is surely the same kind of fallacy as saying "Since Rimbaud went to Ethiopia, anyone who did not go to Ethiopia could not be Rimbaud. Therefore it is necessary that Rimbaud went to Ethiopia". A passage in the *Discourse*, quoted by Brown, which says that since there are no two substances that are completely alike, each substance is – as Aquinas said of angels – a species in itself, may appear to show that all properties of individuals are regarded as necessary by Leibniz. In a letter to Arnauld written in the very same year, however, Leibniz asserts quite unequivocally that the concepts of species include only necessary and eternal truths whereas individual concepts include all that is contingent about the individual. The point made in the *Discourse* passage was the uniqueness of each individual substance, not the similarity of individual concepts and concepts of species.

Leibniz's doctrine of the identity of indiscernibles (or rather the discernibility of non-identicals) does not lead either to a denial of general essence as Brown suggests, or to superessentialism as Jolley suggests. We can still remain grateful to these authors for making us rethink these problems in the context of Leibniz's own disputes and reflections. We must also remember how selective and limited the material included in any developmental account of a thinker as rich and complex as Leibniz necessarily is. His extensive early work on conditional propositions in law, the work on Calculus which he and Newton independently invented, and which occupied him from his mid-twenties to the end of his life, both had a profound influence on the way he thought of the various metaphysical questions discussed in these books, but they are hardly mentioned. Brown quite justifiably says in his foreword that his book does not purport to be comprehensive. In reading a book in the admirably conceived Philosophers in Context series we should not forget that every context discussed can only be a partial context, even when it is diachronically extended to cover the whole working life of a philosopher, as in Stuart Brown's very readable and provocative book.

A History of Philosophy by Martin J. Walsh (614pp. Geoffrey Chapman. Paperback, £11.95. 0 225 66360 0) is divided into the conventional five periods of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy; medieval philosophy; "modern" philosophy; the nineteenth century; and contemporary philosophy. The first section covers the pre-Socratics as well as various philosophical movements such as Stoicism, Epicureanism and Neo-Platonism. The second part begins with the formation of Scholasticism, the main contributors to which, according to the author, are St Anselm, Bernard of Tours, Peter Abelard, as well as the thinkers who sought to reconcile the thought of Plato and Aristotle with the revelation of the Koran, such as Avicenna, Averroes and Alfarabi. The "moderns" divide into the "rationalists" and the "empiricists", and culminate in the synthesis of the two effected by Kant. The penultimate section begins with the German exponents of Absolute Idealism and ends with lesser-known thinkers of countries not normally associated with philosophical innovation: Antonio Labriola of Italy, Julián Sanz del Rio of Spain and V. G. Belinski of Russia. The concluding section deals with contemporary philosophy in all its manifestations.

Roman Satirists in Seventeenth-Century England By William Kupersmith

Writers in seventeenth-century England turned to the satiric poets of Imperial Rome for inspiration in lampooning morals and manners. As such poets as Ben Jonson, John Dryden, and others translated, adapted, and imitated the verses of Juvenal, Horace and Persius, they not only ridiculed the foibles of their own age, but revealed seventeenth-century assumptions about the vices and virtues of Roman times and notions about Latin satire as a genre. For the first time, every published translation, adaptation, and imitation of Juvenal, Horace, and Persius that appeared in England between 1600 and 1700 is examined, showing that, during the course of the century, the Roman satirist was Christianized and transformed into a partisan in English politics. £19.95

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Competition No 252
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 6. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 252" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on December 13.

1 In the grammar of Mrs M's verbs . . . there was only one mood, the Imperative; and that mood had only one tense, the Present.

2 His favourite tense was
The Present Erotic
And he taught her the demotic
Speech of today;
With his bold aire and graces
He put her through her paces,
They did things and went places . . .

3 The past and present wilt – I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Competition No 248
Winner: Francis Wyndham
Answers:

1 "We have, I think, just time to catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter on our journey. You would oblige me by bringing with you your very excellent field-glass."
Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Silver Blaze".

2 He could only keep his eyes on her. "And have you made out the very train – ?" "The very one. Paddington – the 6.50 'Ist'. That gives us oceans; we can dine at the usual hour at home; and as Maggie will be at Buston Square I hereby invite you."
Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*, book 1, chapter 22.

3 At Waterloo all is hustle and bustle, and the society tends to be mixed. Here (at Paddington) a leisurely peace prevails and you get only the best people – cultured men accustomed to mingling with basset-hounds and women in tailored suits who look like

Roots of a revolution

Fergus Millar

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The Muslim conquests in the seventh century must still rank, in spite of immense scholarly attention, as one of the most profoundly unintelligible series of events in history. Amid the vast struggles between the Byzantine and the Sassanid Empires, in which the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614 was triumphantly answered by Heraclius' counter-offensive of the 620s and the recovery of the Cross, nobody could or did predict a sudden tide of conquest from beyond the southern borders of Syria-Palestine. What is more, even in retrospect there is still no clear reason why they should have predicted it. As F. M. Donner admirably showed a few years ago in his *The Early Islamic Conquests* (1981), attempts to find long-term global explanations, such as population-pressures in the Arabian peninsula, fail to make clear why so momentous a change happened so suddenly at that particular moment.

The new factor was a religious and political event: the preaching by Muhammad of obedience to Allah and the very rapid formation of something between a state and a military-diplomatic confederacy centred on Mecca. That in itself is unintelligible enough. It is clear at least that the movement did not owe its origin to the Bedouin of the Empty Quarter, or indeed any of the nomadic or semi-nomadic "Saracens" who lived all the way along the edge of the settled area from Syria round the Fertile Crescent to Mesopotamia and down to the Persian Gulf. It began in the relatively urbanized (though still "tribal") society of the towns which stretched down the western side of the peninsula, that is the area called the Hejaz, in active contact both with Byzantine Syria to the north and the prosperous and settled area of the Yemen to the south.

In the Hejaz, while Arab paganism was still entrenched, notably at the haram of Mecca itself, there were strong Christian influences, and whole tribes which were described as Jewish (as to how and when they were converted I have never found any explanation). As for the new faith itself, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook caused something of a scandal by arguing in *Hagarism: The making of the Islamic world* (1977) that it was in origin a sort of sub-Jewish heresy which looked first to Jerusalem, and only later focused itself on Mecca. The direction of the conquests in the 630s, and the visible message of the Dome of the Rock, built in the 690s on the site of the Temple, might suggest to the ignorant outsider that there is something in this idea.

However there is still a long way to go, first of all in discovering whether any of the content of later Islamic chronicles relating events in pre-Islamic Arabia can actually be used for historical reconstruction. For that the non-specialist without Arabic needs not so much high-level studies such as Franz Rosenthal's remarkable *History of Muslim Historiography* (2nd edn, 1968) as plain translations with some historical notes. Such a thing exists for al-Baladhuri (died AD 892) in the form of P. K. Hitti and F. C. Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State* I-II (1924), but not, in English, for the most important Arab historian for the pre-Islamic period, al-Tabari (died AD 923). For that we would have to go back to Th. Nöldeke's German translation and notes of 1879.

As the dates of these writers indicate, Islamic historiography was itself a relatively late development. The first volume of the Cambridge history, *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (1983), has no section on anything that could claim to be historical writing in that period, that is, up to the mid-eighth century. Yet, as will appear below, inscriptions of the [illegible] do show that Arab chronicles were not legendary, but were local chiefs operating on the fringes of the Roman provincial area.

If the historical study of Arabic traditions about pre-Islamic society has hardly made the progress which the importance of the subject deserves, an impressive start has been made with the archaeological surveying of Saudi Arabia. The results are clearly presented for the general reader in *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities* (1975).

If there is real hope of progress, in the long run, in understanding the cultural context from which Islam emerged, it remains the case of course that any explanation of its success has to be cast also in military and strategic terms. How was so sudden and so decisive a series of military victories possible? What was the previous military role of the Arabs in relation to the Byzantine and Persian empires? How far was either empire already in fact in a situation of dependence on Arab auxiliaries? Was the fact that the victories not only happened, but resulted in lasting conquests partly due to the fact that the population of the Syrian region and the Fertile Crescent was itself in some sense, or in part, "Arab" (whatever that means)?

It was certainly a population where Semitic languages, primarily dialects of Aramaic / Syriac, were in general use, along with Greek. When the western pilgrim Egeria visited Jerusalem in the 380s, the bishop always conducted the services in Greek, even if he knew Syriac; though a presbyter standing beside him translated everything into Syriac for those of the congregation who knew no Greek. But the settled population also included people whose language was identified as Arabic. It is one of the many services of Irfan Shahîd's books to point out that we should not see the culture of the Roman / Byzantine Near East in terms of a simple dichotomy between Greek and Aramaic elements. There was also a component which can be classified as "Arab". In the late fourth century also, Epiphanius describes how a female goddess was worshipped at Petra by a pagan population who called her in Arabic (*Arabisti*) "chaamou" – "that is maiden, or virgin". On the other hand, when the cult of the same goddess, here described (in Latin) as "Venus", "whom the Saracens worship", appears in Jerome's *Life* of Hilarion, as practised at Elusa in the Negev, the language of the "semi-barbarian" inhabitants is identified as Syriac. Shahîd argues rather unconvincingly that the allusion here is really to Arabic. But the essential point remains. There was an "Arab" settled population within the Roman provincial area; and there is a marked contrast between the Islamic retention of this area, where Semitic languages were spoken, and the failure of the Arabs to hold Anatolia, where they were not.

The two books under review represent only the first stages of a major enterprise: they are to be followed by two further volumes, called *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* and *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (due to extend in fact into the early seventh). The author is an Arabist at Georgetown University, known among other things for his chapter on Pre-Islamic Arabia in the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Islam*, and for *The Martyrs of Najran: New documents*, a study of the persecution of Christians in the south Arabian city of Najran in the sixth century. He is also, however, as is very relevant to the present project, a former student of Greats at St John's College, Oxford, where he was a pupil of A. N. Sherwin-White, to whom the first volume is dedicated.

That will help to explain a number of distinctive features of the project as a whole, which is designed to set in context, and to help to explain, the Islamic conquests. Firstly, this revolutionary event is set in a far longer chronological context than is normal. The complex process of contact, conflict and adjustment between Rome and the – or some – Arabs is seen as beginning with Pompey's conquest of the Syrian region in the mid-60s BC, and as having a continuous history from that time on. Second, this history is seen essentially in military and diplomatic terms: frontier wars, the role of Arabs as auxiliaries or irregular ethnic units in the service of Rome, the policing of the frontier zone, and treaties between Rome and [illegible] emphasizes the presence within the various Roman provinces (Syria, Judaea – later Syria Palaestina – Arabia and so forth) of populations which can in some sense be defined as "Arab" (a notorious and insoluble problem on which more later).

For understanding these two books it is necessary to stress, first, that Shahîd is in essence addressing himself to other Arabists; that is, he is using his knowledge of Classical sources to identify both whole communities, like the Nabataeans or Palmyrenes, who should be seen as "Arab", and individual Arabs, or possible Arabs, who surface in narrative sources. Substantial attention is also given to historical writers as such, for instance Ammianus Marcellinus and Eusebius (though not, surprisingly, Josephus, a major source for Nabataean history); some of these receive very detailed examination, concerned with their representation of, and reports on, Arab groups and individuals.

This direction of attention is in many ways successful, in taking a lot of local detail for granted, and concentrating on the long-term evolution of attitudes and relationships. It is quite illuminating, for instance, to see the fall of Palmyra in the late third century as the moment of separation between a military and a trading relationship between Arabs and the population of the Syrian region. Thenceforth it was a succession of semi-nomadic tribes, the Tanukh, the Salihids and the Ghassanids, who acted as the military auxiliaries of Rome. But the best-known trade-routes now ran either further north, across the Fertile Crescent, or directly south, through north-west Arabia, to Mecca.

These two perspectives, the presence of "Arabs" in Greco-Roman literary sources, and the concentration on long-term shifts, are, it is true, gained at some cost in terms of the detailed military and social history of the frontier regions. It is not exactly false to label Nabataea, Palmyra, Idumaea, Emesa or Edessa (Urfa in present-day Turkey) as "Arab" – though it is particularly dubious in the last case, where the predominant language was Syriac, not Arabic. But it does slide over the notorious question of what criteria we apply in using the label "Arab". One way would be to use the term of any group of whom Greco-Roman sources use it, without enquiring as to the justification. Another is to use it functionally, that is of any peoples who led a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence, or can be observed to have sedentarized themselves after such an existence. Another would be to use criteria of language, nomenclature or script. But in spite of the historic importance of the Islamic conquests, it remains logically odd to use such criteria in reverse, chronologically speaking; that is to define as "Arab" any people whose language, nomenclature or script, as used in the first four centuries, resembles that of the Muslims of the seventh century and after.

If we take the example of the Nabataeans, with their capital at Petra, Classical sources do regard them as "Arabs", richer and more sedentarized than most others. But Diodorus rightly described them as writing in "Syrian letters", and in fact both their script and their language represent branches of Aramaic. From the period of Nabataean independence (ie, up to AD 106) it is only the presence of Arab names (ie, names common to Muslim Arabs centuries later) which makes a real cultural connection. If we were to go beyond that, it would require a serious social and cultural study, based on the several thousand surviving Nabataean inscriptions (and the important Nabataean papyri which Y. Yadin discovered in the Judaean Desert in 1961, and whose publication is now finally in hand). But, unfortunately from the point of view of a Classical historian, Shahîd has not seen this material as his brief, any more than he has the numerous Palmyrene inscriptions, or the thousands of potentially revealing graffiti in Semitic languages related to Arabic which are found along the fringes of the desert area. The type known

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Champion of individuals

Hidé Ishiguro

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Leibniz
223pp. Brighton: Harvester. £22.50.
0 7108 0546 2
NICHOLAS JOLLEY
Leibniz and Locke: A Study of the "New Essays on Human Understanding"
125pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0 19 875064 1

Like composers, philosophers of the past go up and down in public esteem, and their influence grows and diminishes in uncanny ways. As was the case earlier with Descartes and Kant, Leibniz is now treated as a thinker who can provide a point of departure for our own philosophical thoughts, rather than as a philosopher who produced a conceptual system of mainly historical interest.

Of the two books under review, Stuart Brown's *Leibniz* is the more ambitious – and indeed unique of its kind. Unlike other commentaries in English, it tries to trace Leibniz's thoughts historically, both in the context of his disputes with his predecessors and contemporaries, and in the development of his own thoughts through his long active life. And unlike similar works written on the Continent, it invokes contemporary philosophical discussions in examining Leibniz's arguments. One of Dr Brown's main contentions is that Leibniz was primarily a problem-solver, rather than the system-builder that he was often claimed to be. His other main contention is that Leibniz should not be regarded as a rationalist; or more exactly, that the later Leibniz turned against his early Cartesianism and was, as far as his theory of knowledge goes, more of an empiricist of the hypothetico-deductive kind. As one who has long asserted that calling Leibniz a rationalist does injustice to his thinking, and *who admires his problem-solving turn of mind*, I am glad to see these points documented by Brown's judicious selection from Leibniz's works.

Whether Locke was the champion empiricist and Leibniz his rationalist critic, or whether it was more or less the other way around, is a question also examined by Nicholas Jolley in his *Leibniz and Locke*. In this much narrower but carefully argued work, Dr Jolley contends that the aim of the *Nouveaux Essais* (which Leibniz wrote late in life in the form of a dialogue with a defender of Locke's *Essay*) was not so much to combat Locke's theory of knowledge (as has customarily been thought) as to attack a materialist theory of mind. Such a theory, Jolley claims, was inherent in the beliefs of the Socinians, a heretic Christian sect (whom Jolley describes as the forerunners of the Unitarians and Deists) towards which Locke was suspected of leaning. Jolley's book contains as an appendix a translation of one of the many hundreds of yet unpublished manuscripts of Leibniz kept in Hannover, this one attacking Unitarian metaphysics.

I do not think that the identification of an author's motive, even if correct, necessarily gives or explains the important features of a work. Nevertheless Jolley's new perspective on *Nouveaux Essais* makes us see the importance for Leibniz of a problem that is also raised by Brown: how we are to have a guarantee that each mind is different from another, and how we are to individuate it. Brown's approach helps us understand and keep apart different views that Leibniz held about the same problem in different periods of his life. Yet his reading of some central doctrines of Leibniz is debatable. I will focus on just two: essences and individual concepts.

According to Brown, Leibniz was committed, in his mature period of the *Discourse of Metaphysics of 1686*, "*to a radical nominalism* which did not accept nature or essences" of natural kinds such as gold. Brown even claims that for Leibniz the world does not contain natural kinds but only particulars. But what kind of view is he ascribing here to Leibniz? That Caesar, for example, was a particular without being a particular person or animal? That there is no nature common to this piece of gold and that piece of gold? Brown writes that for Leibniz individual essences exist but no general essences. But this is quite contrary to the tenor of Leibniz's own remarks. In a letter written in the same year as the *Discourse*, he uses the expressions "under the aspect of generality", "under the aspect of the essence", "under the aspect of species and incomplete notions" all on a par. And, as Jolley points out, in the *Nouveaux Essais* he claims that "it is essential to substance to act, to created substance to be acted upon, to mind to think, to bodies to have extension and motion". These are the essences of any individual substance, but they are not individual (as distinct from general) essences. They are not necessary properties unique to one individual.

As a matter of fact, Leibniz's nominalism is hardly radical. In an early work, he severely criticizes the nominalism of an Italian philosopher, Nizolius, who claimed that universals were nothing more than aggregates of individuals, *and the nominalism of Hobbes, who* said that universals depended on our will, or our decisions to group things together and name them in conventional ways. He nevertheless defends a nominalistic view which he ascribes to Ockham and (contrary to Brown's suggestion) to Aristotle himself. This is the view that takes as fundamental the idea of concrete things. Leibniz's Aristotle says that things of which we can ask the question "how big is it?", "what is it like?", "how is it related to what?" are prior to quantity, quality or relation. The world can be explained without reference to real (independently existing) universals or forms. What is real are concrete individuals. These, of course, have certain modes of being including certain qualities. Leibniz thought, however, that the latter are not entities that exist on their own in addition to individuals. They depend on the relation of individuals to our understanding. We can designate them as abstract entities only after we grasp how individual things are.

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From Leibniz's contemporary Arnauld onwards, most commentators have been troubled by the seeming contradiction between Leibniz's view of individual concepts (concepts corresponding to individual substances and containing all true predicates of it) and his belief in the contingency of many truths about individuals. If the concept of Caesar includes the truth of his crossing the Rubicon, it may appear that it would have been necessary that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Many have thought that there is a special difficulty about the coexistence of individual concepts and human freedom.

Brown attempts to resolve the difficulty by reading Leibniz with what appears to me to be an existentialist twist. He claims that Leibniz allows for two ways of thinking of individuals. One is God's way, in which things are completely individuated *sub ratione possibilitatis and where all the links are atemporal and* fixed. This way, says Brown, is available to human beings only at their deathbed. The other way, *sub ratione generalitatis*, is, according to Brown, how we think of ourselves: as this way leaves open details that are not determined by our general thought, it enables us to choose. But such a reading surely does not do justice to Leibniz, who did not think that thinking in possibilities and generalities were mutually exclusive, and for whom the very common way we think of individuals is indexical and contextual. I know that I just collided with one definite individual, not because I know any feature which distinguishes her from *all other possible individuals*, but because there was only one person I collided with. This is the only actual world, and each of us is unique in it.

Jolley joins some contemporary commentators in claiming that belief in individual concepts leads to "super-essentialism" – the view that every property of an individual is necessary to it. This is surely the same kind of fallacy as saying "Since Rimbaud went to Ethiopia, anyone who did not go to Ethiopia could not be Rimbaud. Therefore it is necessary that Rimbaud went to Ethiopia". A passage in the *Discourse*, quoted by Brown, which says that since there are no two substances that are completely alike, each substance is – as Aquinas said of angels – a species in itself, may appear to show that all properties of individuals are regarded as necessary by Leibniz. In a letter to Arnauld written in the very same year, however, Leibniz asserts quite unequivocally that the concepts of species include only necessary and eternal truths whereas individual concepts include all that is contingent about the individual. The point made in the *Discourse* passage was the uniqueness of each individual substance, not the similarity of individual concepts and concepts of species.

Leibniz's doctrine of the identity of indiscernibles (or rather the discernibility of non-identicals) does not lead either to a denial of general essence as Brown suggests, or to superessentialism as Jolley suggests. We can still remain grateful to these authors for making us rethink these problems in the context of Leibniz's own disputes and reflections. We must also remember how selective and limited the material included in any developmental account of a thinker as rich and complex as Leibniz necessarily is. His extensive early work on conditional propositions in law, the work on Calculus which he and Newton independently invented, and which occupied him from his *mid-twenties to the end of his life, both* had a profound influence on the way he thought of the various metaphysical questions discussed in these books, but they are hardly mentioned. Brown quite justifiably says in his foreword that his book does not purport to be comprehensive. In reading a book in the admirably conceived Philosophers in Context series we should not forget that every context discussed can only be a partial context, even when it is diachronically extended to cover the whole working life of a philosopher, as in Stuart Brown's very readable and provocative book.

A History of Philosophy by Martin J. Walsh (614pp. Geoffrey Chapman. Paperback, £11.95. 0 225 66360 0) is divided into the conventional five periods of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy; medieval philosophy; "modern" philosophy; the nineteenth century; and contemporary philosophy. The first section covers the pre-Socratics as well as various philosophical movements such as Stoicism, Epicureanism and Neo-Platoism. The *second part begins with the formation of Scho*lasticism, the main contributors to which, according to the author, are St Anselm, Bernard of Tours, Peter Abelard, as well as the thinkers who sought to reconcile the thought of Plato and Aristotle with the revelation of the Koran, such as Avicenna, Averroes and Alfarabi. The "moderns" divide into the "rationalists" and the "empiricists", and *culminate* in the synthesis of the two effected by Kant. The penultimate section begins with the German exponents of Absolute Idealism and ends with lesser-known thinkers of countries not normally associated with philosophical innovation: *Antonio Labriola of Italy, Julián Sanz del Rio* of Spain and V. G. Belinski of Russia. The concluding section deals with contemporary philosophy in all its manifestations.

Roman Satirists in Seventeenth-Century England By William Kupersmith

Writers in seventeenth-century England turned to the satiric poets of Imperial Rome for inspiration in lampooning morals and manners. As such poets as Ben Jonson, John Dryden, and others translated, adapted, and imitated the verses of Juvenal, Horace and Persius, they not only ridiculed the fojbles of their own age, but revealed seventeenth-century assumptions about the vices and virtues of Roman times and notions about Latin satire as a genre. For the first time, every published translation, adaptation, and imitation of Juvenal, Horace, and Persius that appeared in England between 1600 and 1700 is examined, showing that, during the course of the century, the Roman satirist was Christianized and transformed into a partisan in English politics. £19.95

University of Nebraska Press
1 Gower Street London WC1E 6HA

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 252
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 6. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 252" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on December 13.

1 In the grammar of Mrs M's verbs . . . there was only one mood, the Imperative; and that mood had only one tense, the Present.

2 His favourite tense was
The Present Erotic
And he taught her the demotic
Speech of today.
With his bold airs and graces
He put her through her paces,
They did things and went places –
She was quite carried away.

3 The past and present will – I have *fill'd* them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Competition No 248
Winner: Francis Wyndham
Answers:
1 "We have, I think, *just time to* catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter on our journey. You would oblige me by bringing with you your very excellent field-glass."
Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Silver Blaze".

2 He could only keep his eyes on her. "And have you made out the very train – ?" "The very one. Paddington – the 6.50 'in'. That gives us oceans; we can dine at the usual hour at home; and as Maggie will be at Euston Square I hereby invite you."
Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*, book 1, chapter 22.

3 At Waterloo all is hustle and bustle, and the society *tends to be mixed*. Here (at Paddington) a leisurely peace prevails and you get only the best people – cultured men accustomed to mingling with bassets-hounds and women in tailored suits who look like horses.
P. G. Wodehouse, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*.

Roots of a revolution

Fergus Millar

IRFAN SHAHÎD
Rome and the Arabs: A prolegomenon to the study of Byzantium and the Arabs
193pp. $12.50.
0 88402 115 7
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628pp. $30.
0 88402 116 5
Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Publications

The Muslim conquests in the seventh century must still rank, in spite of immense scholarly attention, as one of the most profoundly unintelligible series of events in history. Amid the *vast struggles between the Byzantine and the* Sassanid Empires, in which the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614 was triumphantly answered by Heraclius' counter-offensive of the 620s and the recovery of the Cross, nobody could or did predict a sudden tide of conquest from beyond the southern borders of Syria-Palestine. What is more, even in retrospect there is still no clear reason why they should have predicted it. As F. M. Donner admirably showed a few years ago in his *The Early Islamic Conquests* (1981), attempts to find long-term global explanations, such as population-pressures in the Arabian peninsula, fail to make clear why so momentous a change happened so suddenly at that particular moment.

The new factor was a religious and political event: the preaching by Muhammad of obedience to Allah and the very rapid formation of something between a state and a military-diplomatic confederacy centred on Mecca. That in itself is unintelligible enough. It is clear at least that the movement did not owe its origin to the Bedouin of the Empty Quarter, or indeed any of the nomadic or semi-nomadic "Saracens" *who lived all the way along the* edge of the settled area from Syria round the Fertile Crescent to Mesopotamia and down to the Persian Gulf. It began in the relatively urbanized (though still "tribal") society of the towns which stretched down the western side of the peninsula, that is the area called the Hejaz, in active contact both with Byzantine Syria to the north and the prosperous and settled area of the Yemen to the south.

In the Hejaz, while Arab paganism was still entrenched, notably at the haram of Mecca itself, there were strong Christian influences, and whole tribes which were described as Jewish (as to how and when they were converted I have never found any explanation). As for the new faith itself, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook caused something of a scandal by arguing in *Hagarism: The making of the Islamic world* (1977) that it was in origin a sort of sub-Jewish heresy which looked first to Jerusalem, and only later focused itself on Mecca. The direction of the conquests in the 630s, and the visible message of the Dome of the Rock, built in the 690s on the site of the Temple, might suggest to the ignorant outsider that there is something in this idea.

However there is still a long way to go, first of all in discovering whether any of the content of later Islamic chronicles relating events in pre-Islamic Arabia can actually be used for historical reconstruction. For that the non-specialist without Arabic needs not so much high-level studies such as Franz Rosenthal's remarkable *History of Muslim Historiography* (2nd edn, 1968) as plain translations with some historical notes. Such a thing exists for al-Baladhuri (died AD 892) *in the form of P. K.* Hitti and F. C. Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State* I–II (1924), but not, in English, for the most important Arab historian for the pre-Islamic period, al-Tabari (died AD 923). For that we would have to go back to Th. Nöldeke's German translation and notes of 1879.

As the dates of these writers indicate, Islamic historiography was itself a relatively late development. The first volume of the Cambridge history, *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (1983), has no section on anything that could claim to be historical writing in that period, that is, up to the mid-eighth century. Yet, as will appear below, inscriptions of the third and fourth centuries do show that at least some individuals mentioned in later Arab chronicles were not legendary, but were local chiefs operating on the fringes of the Roman provincial area.

If the historical study of Arabic traditions about pre-Islamic society has hardly made the progress which the importance of the subject deserves, an impressive start has been made with the archaeological surveying of Saudi Arabia. The results are clearly presented for the general reader in *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities* (1975).

If there is real hope of progress, in the long run, in understanding the cultural context from which Islam emerged, it remains the case of course that any explanation of its success has to be cast also in military and strategic terms. How was so sudden and so decisive a series of military victories possible? What was the previous military role of the Arabs in relation to the Byzantine and Persian empires? How far was either empire already in fact in a situation of dependence on Arab auxiliaries? Was the fact that the victories not only happened, but resulted in lasting conquests partly due to the fact that the population of the Syrian region and *the Fertile Crescent was itself in some* sense, or in part, "Arab" (whatever that means)?

It was certainly a population where Semitic languages, primarily dialects of Aramaic / Syriac, were in general use, along with Greek. When the western pilgrim Egeria visited Jerusalem in the 380s, the bishop always conducted the services in Greek, even if he knew Syriac; though a presbyter standing beside him translated everything into Syriac for those of the congregation who knew no Greek. But the settled population also included people whose language was identified as Arabic. It is one of the many services of Irfan Shahîd's books to point out that we should not see the culture of the Roman / Byzantine Near East in terms of a simple dichotomy between Greek and Aramaic elements. There was also a component which can be classified as "Arab". In the late fourth century also, Epiphanius describes how a female goddess was worshipped at Petra by a pagan population who called her in Arabic (*Arabisti*) "chaamou" – "that is maiden, or virgin". On the other hand, when the cult of the same goddess, here described (in Latin) as "Venus", "whom the Saracens worship", appears in Jerome's *Life* of Hilarion, as practised at Elusa in the Negev, the language of the "semi-barbarian" inhabitants is identified as Syriac. Shahîd argues rather unconvincingly that the allusion here is really to Arabic. But the essential point remains. There was an "Arab" settled population within the Roman provincial area; and there is a marked contrast between the Islamic retention of this area, where Semitic languages were spoken, and the failure of the Arabs to hold Anatolia, where they were not.

The two books under review represent only the first stages of a major enterprise: they are to be followed by two further volumes, called *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* and *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (due to extend in fact into the early seventh). The author is an Arabist at Georgetown University, known among other things for his chapter on Pre-Islamic Arabia in the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Islam*, and for *The Martyrs of Najran: New documents*, a study of the persecution of Christians in the south Arabian city of Najran in the sixth century. He is also, however, as is very relevant to the present project, a former student of Greats at St John's College, Oxford, where he was a pupil of A. N. Sherwin-White, to whom the first volume is dedicated.

That will help to explain a number of distinctive features of the project as a whole, which is designed to set in context, and to help to explain, the Islamic conquests. Firstly, this revolutionary event is set in a far longer chronological context than is normal. The complex process of contact, conflict and adjustment between Rome and the – or some – Arabs is seen as beginning with Pompey's conquest of the Syrian region in the mid-60s BC, and as having a continuous history from that time on. Second, this history is seen essentially in military and diplomatic terms: frontier wars, the role of Arabs as auxiliaries or irregular ethnic units in the service of Rome, the policing of the frontier zone, and treaties between Rome and Arab tribes or confederations. Third, it emphasizes the presence within the various Roman provinces (Syria, Judaea – later Syria Palaestina – Arabia and so forth) of populations which can in some sense be defined as "Arab" (a notorious and insoluble problem on which more later).

For understanding these two books it is necessary to stress, first, that Shahîd is in essence addressing himself to other Arabists; that is, he is using his knowledge of Classical sources to identify both whole communities, like the Nabataeans or Palmyrenes, who should be seen as "Arab", and individual Arabs, or possible Arabs, who surface in narrative sources. Substantial attention is also given to historical writers as such, for instance Ammianus Marcellinus and Eusebius (though not, surprisingly, Josephus, a major source for Nabataean history); some of these receive very detailed examination, concerned with their representation of, and reports on, Arab groups and individuals.

This direction of attention is in many ways successful, in taking a lot of local detail for granted, and concentrating on the long-term evolution of attitudes and relationships. *It is* quite illuminating, for instance, to see the fall of Palmyra in the late third century as the moment of separation between a military and a trading relationship between Arabs and the population of the Syrian region. Thenceforth it was a succession of semi-nomadic tribes, the Tanukh, the Salihids and the Ghassanids, who acted as the military auxiliaries of Rome. But the best-known trade-routes now ran either further north, across the Fertile Crescent, or directly south, through north-west Arabia, to Mecca.

These two perspectives, the presence of "Arabs" in Greco-Roman literary sources, and the concentration on long-term shifts, are, it is true, gained at some cost in terms of the detailed military and social history of the frontier regions. It is not exactly false to label Nabataea, Palmyra, Idumaea, Emesa or Edessa (Urfa in present-day Turkey) as "Arab" – though it is particularly dubious in the last case, where the predominant language was Syriac, not Arabic. But it does slide over the notorious question of what criteria we apply in using the label "Arab". One way would be to use the term of any group of *whom Greco-Roman sources use it, without* enquiring as to the justification. Another is to use it functionally, that is of any peoples who led a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence, or can be observed to have sedentarized themselves after such an existence. Another would be to use criteria of language, nomenclature or script. But in spite of the historic importance of the Islamic conquests, it remains logically odd to use such criteria in reverse, chronologically speaking; that is to define as "Arab" any people whose language, nomenclature or script, as used in the first four centuries, resembles that of the Muslims of the seventh century and after.

If we take the example of the Nabataeans, with their capital at Petra, Classical sources do regard them as "Arabs", richer and more sedentarized than most others. But Diodorus rightly described them as writing in "Syrian letters", and in fact both their script and their language represent branches of Aramaic. From the period of Nabataean independence (ie, up to AD 106) it is only the presence of Arab names (ie, names common to Muslim Arabs centuries later) which makes a real cultural connection. If we were to go beyond that, it would require a serious social and cultural study, based on the several thousand surviving Nabataean inscriptions (and the important Nabataean papyri which Y. Yadin discovered in the Judaean Desert in 1961, and whose publication is now finally in hand). But, unfortunately from the point of view of a Classical historian, Shahîd has not seen this material as his brief, any more than he has the numerous Palmyrene inscriptions, or the thousands of potentially revealing graffiti in Semitic languages related to Arabic which are found along the fringes of the desert area. The type known

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First-century terms

Elizabeth Rawson

MARY BEARD and MICHAEL CRAWFORD
Rome in the Late Republic
106pp. Duckworth. £15 (paperback, £5.95).
0 7156 1900 4

The authors open by declaring that Cicero would have disliked this book. I am not so sure. He did think that a work on the history of his time should reveal an understanding of revolution, and give an interpretation of men and events; only so could one learn from it. But he might feel rather bemused by some passages.

Mary Beard and Michael Crawford, assuming a basic knowledge of the period, eschew narrative and for the most part discussion of the sources and their problems, and address themselves to an "analytic description" of society and politics in the late Republic, designed to help explain the collapse of the system into *monarchy*. They envisage a readership of "some sixth-formers, undergraduates and their teachers". The sixth-formers will have to be unusually serious, for the book makes few concessions, except in brevity and lucidity, to readability (the booklet recently edited by T. P. Wiseman, *Roman Political Life* (1985), is more vivid and imaginative, if slighter), and specialists in the field will not learn anything new. But members of intervening categories will find an on the whole excellent account of what are mostly now the orthodox views in Britain, and in the footnotes an uncommonly useful guide to recent literature in English, with brief but judicious comments on many of the works cited. Perhaps it would not have hurt such readers, however, to be warned that the picture would look distinctly different if based on the works of, say, Italian scholars – as Crawford, if anyone, knows.

Much has changed in the study of late Republican history in the past couple of decades; this account reflects such things as the increased interest in the Italian background, the debates on the nature of Roman imperialism, and the tendency to analyse society in terms of status rather than class (a contrast which is not made explicit). An excellent touch is the stress on the private group of advisers without whom no Roman would take any important step in private or public life. There might have been (in order to extirpate error still rife in the schools) more emphasis on the modifications we now make to the traditional views on the decline of the peasantry in the second century; and, perhaps in reaction against the Marxist obsession with slavery, there is nothing on the great slave risings or the, admittedly secondary, role of slaves in urban unrest and civil war.

The authors insist, rightly, that cultural and religious history are an important part of the whole; they do not, however, always handle *the role of ideas very adequately*. They insist strongly that family (and, they might add, other personal) links did not always determine individual policy, but that ideology had a place. What the ideologies of the time were, however, we are not really told; the word *popularis* occurs once, in the title of an article cited, the words *optimates* or *boni* not at all, if I have checked properly. Perhaps this has to do with the polemical statement that "it is impossible now to understand the first century BC in first century terms". Surely one must first attempt to understand it in its own terms, and then use this and other evidence to understand it in ours. Not to try to establish the way in which Cicero and Sallust, practising politicians and, with all their limitations, thoughtful men, saw politics and society in their day is to hamstring oneself.

Fortunately the authors do not in fact live up to this perverse programme; the chapter on religion, in particular, is much concerned to sweep away anachronistic notions still all too common in discussing the subject. The chapter on "the cultural horizons of the aristocracy" is rather conventional, however, and gives no idea of the content of such words as Stoicism or Epicureanism and the sort of influence these philosophies might have had on a man's social or political activity; it also underestimates the exposure of many of the poorer classes, in what was among other things a theatre-mad society, to some sort of Hellenization, and overestimates the extent to which, even after the Social War, Greek influence had to be channelled to the rest of Italy through Rome. On all these matters Cicero could have put the record straight. But the book remains a very useful one.

Fixed positions

Paul Cartledge

J. F. LAZENBY
The Spartan Army
210pp. Warminster: Aris and Phillips. £16.
0 85668 142 3

J. F. Lazenby is impeccably honest. When he was supposed to be sniffing out Mycenaean sites (so he tells us in dedicating this book to his fellow site-hound Dick Hope Simpson), he was inspecting Classical Greek battlegrounds. And in the very first sentence of the preface the reader is briskly informed that *The Spartan Army* "is not, except incidentally, a book about Sparta, nor a book about Greek warfare, nor yet a military history of Sparta itself".

This honesty should not, I think, be allowed to disarm criticism. It is one thing when historians of ancient Greece are oblivious to the "new directions" in historiography charted by the likes of Iggers and Stone; one thinks especially of the attempts at *rapprochement* between history and the social sciences. It is quite another when they revert to a frankly seventeenth-century vision of history as antiquarian erudition. Even Michael Howard, who is not usually thought of as a remarkably radical historian of war, had no hesitation in telling readers of *History Today* last December that the structure of the societies of classical antiquity "cannot be dissociated" from their military activity. Lazenby's claim to be writing a history of the Spartan army as distinct from (and apparently opposed to) a history of Sparta seems to me therefore to be misguided at best.

This is not to say that the work as thus narrowly conceived is not very competently done. Long proximity to Hadrian's Wall and the experience gained in writing about Hannibal's war (1978) have stood him in good stead, he is perfectly familiar with the relevant written sources, and (as hinted above) he has followed to the letter Polybius' prescription of autopsy as a specific for the composition of truly "pragmatic" history. The bulk of the subject-matter, which ranges in date from the eighth to the second centuries BC, is distributed into two broad sections: "Preparation" and "Battle" – in fact minute descriptions of Thermopylai, Plataia, Pylos, (First) Mantineia, the Nemea River, (Second) Koroneia, Lechaion, and Leuktra. Second Mantineia and Sellasia among other engagements receive only brief and passing mention in the somewhat breathless epilogue which trots from the 360s to Nabis.

In the first and most original section the *technique of exposition*, which turns into a technique of argument, is to proceed from the known – or the least imperfectly known – to the completely unknown; that is, from the age of Xenophon in the first half of the fourth century to the misty "origins" of the Spartan army in perhaps the eighth or seventh. Nothing wrong with that – in principle. (Much error might have been avoided, for example, if students of Archaic and Classical Greek economic history had started from the evidence for the best-documented Greek economy, that of fourth-century Athens, and worked backwards and outwards rather than importing inappropriate concepts from the history of modern western Europe.) But the results of Lazenby's deployment of the technique are rather less reassuring.

Few will doubt that conservatism was a master trait of Spartan culture; as Oswyn Murray has remarked, entrenched minorities tend to overvalue the past. Equally few, though, will swallow whole Lazenby's contention that the Spartan army of the fourth century was in all organizational essentials the same as the Spartan army of the eighth or seventh century; in particular, his notion that *perioikoi* were never brigaded with Spartans in the *morai* deserves the strongest possible challenge.

Unfortunately, for both the general reader and the specialist in ancient Greek history, to make or break such a case regularly involves minute, including palaeographic, reading of the *received texts of, especially*, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon. Consensus among the specialists (from whom U. Cozzoli has been culpably omitted by Lazenby) is most unlikely ever to be reached. Negatively, however, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Lazenby's main thesis of continuity is *prima facie* wildly implausible. For it necessitates believing that, amid all the other invincibly documented changes affecting her political and economic arrangements, Sparta preserved unchanged the expression and instrument of her power and indeed her very being. (The very similar case advanced by K. M. T. Chrimes in the late 1940s for faithful conservation of Sparta's social system from hoary antiquity deep into the Roman period is vulnerable to the same objection.) *It is at any* rate noteworthy that Lazenby is prepared to countenance the possibility that the arrangements at the Karneia festival altered between the seventh and second centuries: yet one would have thought that religion might tend to be much more immune from change than army organization.

In his many disagreements with other scholars (not least a certain P. A. Cartledge) in this notoriously mine-strewn field Lazenby is throughout unfailingly courteous – a very model of historiographical propriety. I only wish I could recommend his book with equal enthusiasm. But the combination of narrowness of scope, avoidance of comparative material, and excessive *concentration* (more than half the book) on the near-hopeless task of detailed reconstruction of battles has doused the ardour I should have liked to feel. Let me at least conclude on a note of praise for the publishers: *The Spartan Army* is nicely produced, clearly illustrated and reasonably priced.

as "Safaitic", for instance, stretch from the Safa (the volcanic region south-east of Damascus) to Dura-Europus on the Euphrates and Hama on the Orontes, and in time from the second century AD to the early seventh. Here indeed would be a field in which an Arabist could illuminate social and cultural evolution in a frontier zone.

Nor, on the other hand, does Shahid follow in close geographical and chronological detail the dispositions of the Roman army along the frontier. Its presence is attested on occasion as far south as Ruwwafa and Medain Salih in the northern Hejaz (the latter place some 200 miles from Medina), or at Jawf in the Wadi Sirhan, which stretches from near Amman south-eastwards into Saudi Arabia. All this is dealt with more clearly by G. W. Bowersock in *Roman Arabia* (1983). The topography of the Roman frontier zone in present-day Jordan is the subject of continuing research by T. S. Parker for the southern sector and D. L. Kennedy for the northern.

Detailed topographical and inscriptional work will surely reveal much more about this frontier area, as the site of both an intermingling of economies and cultures, and alternating collaboration and conflict at a military level. We shall be fortunate, however, if anyone discovers anything which more clearly illuminates the major themes of Shahid's books than do the two extraordinarily rich inscriptions which come respectively from south and east of the Hauran (Jebel Druze). The first is a bilingual inscription, in Greek and in a Nabataean script developing towards cursive Arabic, put up at Umm al-jumal in the third century. It was published in 1914 in that great record of exploration, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909*, a still unexhausted treasure-house of information. It commemorates a man described as "tutor (*tropheus* in Greek) of Gadhimat, King of Tanukh". The king can only be the Gadhimat, chief of the tribe Tanukh, whom later Islamic sources record as having fought against Zenobia of Palmyra, in the second half of the third century. Here we have, if not the king himself, at any rate his bi-cultural tutor, buried near a Roman fort, and not far from the Via Nova built under Trajan.

Equally revealing is the inscription from Namara, near another Roman fort, some miles east of the Hauran massif. Here in AD 328 there was buried 'Imru'u l-Qays, son of 'Amr ibn 'Adi, "King of the Arabs". The inscription records his campaigns, which took him as far as Najran in southern Arabia, and his dealings with minor chiefs: "and he dealt gently with the nobles of the tribes and appointed them viceroys, and they became phylarchs for the Romans". The translation is that of James A. Bellamy, who has recently re-studied the inscription in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, and demonstrated that, although written in Nabataean script, it can be read as standard Arabic. That is, it is the earliest written evidence for Classical Arabic, ie, the language of Islam.

The two chiefs may well have been related, for Islamic sources name Gadhimat's successor as his nephew 'Amir ibn 'Adi, and *his* son as Imru'ul-Qays. Once again at least some "real" history is preserved in these sources. Naturally there are problems. Tabari alleges that Imru'u l-Qays was converted to Christianity. There is less than nothing to suggest that in the inscription, and the conversion may in fact have been that of a later chief of the same name. But the spread of Christianity among the Arabs beyond the frontier is a real fact of fourth-century history, and one which is important for the nature of the links binding them to the Empire. This too is very fully discussed by Shahid, who in the course of that devotes a long section to Mavia (Māwiya), queen of the Saracens, who led a great assault on the borders of the Empire in early 378. This story, told only by the Church Historians, and also discussed recently by Bowersock, seems to indicate that it was in the course of the settlement of hostilities that she converted to Christianity and asked for a bishop to be sent, specifically a hermit from Sinai. More significant, from the other side, is the report in Sozomenus' *Church History* in the fifth century that Mavia's military feats were still celebrated in songs (*odai*) by the Saracens – the earliest reference which we have to war poetry in Arabic.

Enough has been said to give an impression of the ambitious scope of Shahīd's major enterprise, which already opens up many new perspectives on the great revolution of the seventh century, and will surely reveal more.

A Roman officer's dagger, discovered at Oberammergau and now in the Prähistorische Staatssamlung, Munich: an illustration from The Romans in Central Europe *by Herbert Schutz (200pp, with 165 black-and-white and 29 coloured illustrations. Yale University Press. £20. 0 300 03200 5). Schwartz examines the military setting, Roman religious culture along the Rhine and the Danube, arts and crafts, and provincial society in crisis and transition. The question of how far the native peoples of the region participated in Roman "High Culture", he concludes, remains open.*

Some clubs do have them

A. L. Le Quesne

MICHAEL DOWN
Is It Cricket?: Power, money and politics in cricket since 1945
160pp. Queen Anne Press. £8.95.
0356 10799 X
DON MOSEY
Boycott
224pp. Methuen. £9.95.
0413 572307
GERALD BRODRIBB
Next Man In: A survey of cricket laws and customs
261pp. Pelham. £9.95.
07207 15857

Michael Down's *Is It Cricket?* is subtitled *Power, money and politics in cricket since 1945*, which as a guide to the contents is a good deal more effective than the title. It is in fact a social history of first-class cricket over the last forty years, a book which badly needed to be written; and Down has done his job well. He rightly locates the early 1960s as the period of critical change, and he is by no means starry-eyed about the transformations that have come over the game since then; but he argues persuasively that, given the social circumstances, they were practically inevitable. He is particularly good and interesting on money, using tables to illustrate both the steep relative decline in the financial position of the professional cricketer in the 1950s and the crisis that was staring most county cricket clubs in the face by the early 1960s. The social history of the period, which Down sees as the conditioning factor behind the changes in the game, is only sketched in in a series of the broadest and haziest generalizations, but the book successfully opens up new and very interesting territory, and can be strongly recommended.

Prominent among the numerous internal crises that Down sees as one of the characteristics of the game during the last thirty years is the long-running Boycott saga, which Don Mosey chronicles most efficiently in his *Boycott*. As the author has painfully discovered for himself, there is really no possibility of neutrality in the bitter disputes that have for so long raged around his central figure. Mosey is professionally a sporting journalist who knows Yorkshire cricket intimately and was for many years on friendly terms with Boycott; but he has ultimately come to the opinion that by the 1980s anyway the presence of Boycott in the county side is incompatible with the best interests of Yorkshire cricket. Nevertheless, this is for the most part a detached and fair-minded account, in which blame rests far less on Boycott himself than on the inadequate management of the Yorkshire County Cricket Club in the 1970s and on the fanaticism of his supporters in the so-called Reform Group. Mosey can himself be uncritical in his attitude to his heroes, notably Close; and it is possible that a study of Down's book would have left him less confident that the troubles which beset Yorkshire in the 1970s could have been avoided. But his book is an impressively convincing portrait of an extraordinary character. Boycott, the archetypal loner, has the capacity to live off his own resources that all great batsmen require (there is an interesting comparison to be drawn with Bradman); unfortunately for Boycott, his greatness has been tarnished by the difficulties he has always had in communicating with his peers and in working in harmony with them.

Gerald Brodribb's *Next Man In* is a much-revised new edition of a book originally published in 1952, which a great many cricket enthusiasts have undoubtedly, like myself, treasured ever since. It must with regret be said that the new edition is a good deal less handsomely and spaciously produced than the original, but I suppose one has to expect that. The structure of Mr Brodribb's delightfully idiosyncratic book is based on the current Laws, which are reproduced in full with a section of authorial comment after each. But this is not essentially a history of the Laws' evolution, still less a treatise on their detailed interpretation – it is far more a collection of cricketing curiosities. If you delight in tales of umpires who have miscounted to the extent of allowing fourteen-ball overs, of batsmen who have set off for a run in the wrong direction, or been lured into making false declarations by the sound of a muffin-man's bell from the street outside, of bowlers who have returned analyses of 0-0-0-0, of butterflies slain by off breaks in flight and of West Indies fieldsmen collapsing in hysterics at the splendour of Gilbert Jessop's hitting, then this is the book for you – and welcome to the club.

Fast coach to Mortlake

Ian Thomson

DANIEL TOPOLSKI
Boat Race: The Oxford revival
287pp. Collins. £12.95.
0002181177

The stigma that "Oxford is the home of lost causes" is washed well away – so far as rowing is concerned – by Dan Topolski's book *Boat Race*. With some flair as a writer, too, he explains how success resulted from obsession, how deep a psychological change came over Oxford rowing when he was invited to put the finishing touches to successive Oxford crews and how he set to work to develop élitism in oarsmanship, which, with a degree of competitive exhaustion, has turned the tables on Cambridge for a decade. It is an enthralling inside story, no punches pulled, yet recounted in considerable detail with a winsome touch of modesty. *The sting and satisfaction show in the* subtitle *The Oxford revival*. The book is so single-minded in its main concern, the annual trounicing at Mortlake, that college rowing is barely given credit for its contribution as a resource; Cambridge rowing is only a necessary adjunct to the final issue; and the pursuit of academic excellence seems to play an altogether minor role (even if not in the minds of conscientious and successful oarsmen) in the mind of Topolski himself: nevertheless, he gains an alpha for re-establishing Oxford in this world-renowned event.

The invitation to Topolski to coach Oxford came when he was a patient in the Hospital for Tropical Diseases and it doubtless hastened his recovery. Having rowed for Westminster School and the London Rowing Club, he was "native" to the Tideway and knew the Thames better than many a coach. He had also had the benefit of being coached not only by the legendary "Jumbo" Edwards, innovator and perfectionist, but also by the professional waterman Ted Phelps, to whom he pays unqualified tribute. He was also fortunate in having some expert colleagues as coaches such as Chris Blackwell, whose Isis crews provided many oarsmen for future Boat Races.

One of the fascinations of the book is the description and analysis of each Oxford University Boat Club President, and of his relationships with crew, coaches and the media. Topolski had to adjust from being lion-tamer to wet-nurse, from Dutch uncle to diplomat. He also learnt his winning ways from dire adversity.

The 1973 race was lost by a hopeless miscalculation, no safeguard against rough conditions. The next year raised tension to a peak when the OUBC President, Sawyier, brought in two oarsmen without so much as consulting the coaches; nevertheless, Oxford beat Cambridge by 5½ lengths and broke the record in doing so, 17 minutes 35 seconds. In 1975 Oxford lost by 3¾ lengths, after the gate of a rigger flew open and the Oxford bow fell back in the boat with his oar on his lap. With five Old Blues rowing in 1976, Oxford avenged themselves in fine style, winning by six lengths in yet another record time, 16 minutes 58 seconds. The 1977 race was notable for Ladbroke's first sponsorship, a new Carbocraft boat and Topolski's determination to dispel any complacency. Oxford won by seven lengths. The following year it was Cambridge's turn to suffer disaster: in spite of delaying tactics at the start and jumping the gun, Cambridge, having taken no precautions against rough conditions, sank near Barnes Bridge, leaving Oxford to finish alone.

With Janousek called in to coach Cambridge, both Universities now had coaches with an Eastern European pedigree. But Oxford won a slogging race, with little tide and heavy going, by 3½ lengths, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the event. The 1980 race was rowed with the prospect of the Moscow Olympics ahead, and Boris Rankov, in his third race, as OUBC President. Oxford scraped home by three feet, given as a canvas, with one member of the crew suffering from a mild attack of hepatitis. In 1981 the crew watched *Chariots of Fire* the night before the race and went to bed electrified; Sue Brown, the first woman Boat Race cox, steered them to a comfortable victory next morning. Oxford went on to win the Grand Challenge Cup and Henley three months later. With Sue Brown at the rudder strings again next year, how could Oxford lose? They didn't.

Then came the heated controversy over Rankov in 1983. In spite of a death threat, he rowed for the sixth successive victory, three times on bowside and three times on strokeside.

This book ends with the 1984 race, when Cambridge excelled themselves by ramming a barge moored by the stakeboats. In the postponed race next day, Oxford broke the record yet again, 16 mins 45 secs. Since then Oxford have won for the tenth successive time, and Dan Topolski is the key figure in this run of victories. A few incidents are reported and remarks made that are unworthy of British rowing; but, those apart, this book is factually detailed and eminently readable.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

John Campbell's biography of Aneurin Bevan will be published next year.

Paul Cartledge's *King Agesilaos II and the Crisis of Sparta* will be published in 1986.

Brian Case is co-author with Stan Britt of *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Jazz*, 1978.

Linda Colley's *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714–60* was published in 1982.

Joyce Crick is a lecturer in German at University College London.

Joseph Darracott is editing a selection of John Constable's letters.

Anthony Fothergill is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Exeter.

Charles Fox's most recent book, with Max Harrison and Eric Thacker as co-authors, *The Essential Jazz Records, Volume One: Ragtime to Swing*, was published last year.

Hide Ishiguro is Professor of Philosophy at Barnard College, Columbia University.

R. R. Kedward is the editor, with Roger Austin, of *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology*, which was published earlier this year.

John Keegan is the author of *Six Armies in Normandy*, 1982.

A. L. Le Quesne's books include *The Bodyline Controversy*, 1983.

Fergus Millar is Camden Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford.

Ben Pimlott is the editor of *Fabian Essays in Socialist Thought*, to be published later this month.

Elizabeth Rawson's books include *Cicero: A portrait*, 1975.

Christopher Reid's most recent collection of poems, *Katerina Brac*, was published last month.

Pat Rogers is editor of the *New Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature*, which will appear in 1987.

Paul Smith is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.

Paul Thompson is Reader in Social History at the University of Essex.

Ian Thomson is a quondam Chaplain of All Souls College, Oxford, and was for twenty-seven years rowing correspondent of the *Observer*.

W. L. Warren is the author of *Henry II*, 1973.

Eugene Weber is Joan Palewsky Professor of Modern European History at the University of California, Los Angeles.

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Astley, Thea. An Item from the Late News. Beachmasters **1295**

Beard, Mary, and Michael Crawford. Rome in the Late Republic **1302**

Beattie, John. The Life and Career of Klaus Barbie: An eyewitness record **1282**

Benstar, Stephen. Such Men are Dangerous **1296**

Brodribb, Gerald. Next Man In: A survey of cricket laws and customs **1303**

Boorman, John. Money into Light: "The Emerald Forest": A diary **1287**

Boutry, Philippe, and Jacques Nassif. Martin L'Archange **1281**

Bower, Tom. Klaus Barbie: Butcher of Lyons **1282**

Brahe, John. These Golden Days **1296**

Brooks, Maggie. Heavenly Deception **1294**

Brown, Stuart. Leibniz **1300**

Callender, Red, and Elaine Cohen. Unfinished Dream: The musical world of Red Callender **1288**

Clements, Keith. Henry Lamb: The artist and his friends **1284**

Conrad, Peter. *The Everyman History of English Literature* **1279**

Crawford, Alan. C. R. Ashbee: Architect, designer and romantic socialist **1283**

Down, Michael. Is It Cricket?: Power, money and politics in cricket since 1945 **1303**

Frame, Janet. Owls Do Cry **1295**

Giddins, Gary. Rhythm-a-ning: Jazz tradition and innovation in the 80s **1288**

Handke, Peter. The Weight of the World. Slow Homecoming **1297**

Holmes, Martin. The Labour Government, 1974–79: Political aims and economic reality **1285**

Heyos, Ladislas de. Klaus Barbie: The untold story **1282**

Jolley, Nicholas. Leibniz and Locke: A study of the "New Essays on Human Understanding" **1300**

Kaufman, Gerald. My Life in the Silver Screen **1287**

Keefe, Thomas K. Feudal Assessments and the Political Community under Henry II and His Sons **1281**

Kenny, Anthony. The Logic of Deterrence **1286**

Lazenby, J. F. The Spartan Army **1302**

Linklater, Magnus, Isabel Hilton and Neal Ascherson. The Fourth Reich: Klaus Barbie and the neo-fascist connection **1282**

Mortimer, John. Paradise Postponed **1294**

Mosey, Don. Boycott **1303**

Packer, William. Henry Moore: An illustrated biography **1284**

Rustin, Michael. For a Pluralist Socialism **1285**

Shahid, Irfan. Rome and the Arabs: A prolegomenon to the study of Byzantium and the Arabs. Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century **1301**

Topolski, Daniel. Boat Race: The Oxford revival **1303**

Walker, Ted. You've Never Heard Me Sing: Short stories **1296**

Walser, Martin. Messmers Gedanken. Brandung **1298**

Wolf, Christa. Cassandra: A novel and four essays **1298**

The children's novel *The Watch House*, which was reviewed on October 11, was described as Robert Westall's "*new novel*". It was first published in 1977 and has been reissued as a revised edition.

Joel T. Rosenthal himself describes his *Anglo-Saxon History: An annotated bibliography, 450–1066* (177pp. New York: AMS Press, distributed in the UK by Burospan. $34.50. 0 404 61437 X) as "short and necessarily selective" and acknowledges that some of his decisions "may seem a bit idiosyncratic". "Isolationist" might seem more appropriate, given the omission of all Continental scholarship on the Anglo-Saxons. Apart from one or two articles in French by English-speaking authors, this is a list of works in English. It has been organized under the headings "Reference and Collected volumes", "Primary Sources and Scholarship on Sources", the different historical topics – political, ecclesiastical, social and economic – and "Science, technology and agriculture", and with sections on distinct types of historical evidence and the ancillary disciplines such as place-names, numismatics and archaeology. These are lettered A–K with subsections. The name index gives references to the selections rather than the pages, and is thus laborious to use.

Rosamond McKitterick